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ABSTRACT

This report surveys the history and culture of the Germans, Czechs, Bohemians, Slovaks, Lebanese, Croatians, and rural white migrants who settled Soulard, a neighborhood in St. Louis, and describes the social organizations, religious activities, and economic patterns of the various groups. An overview of the community as it is today is included, as well as some projections for its future. References, a map of the neighborhood, and photographs are included. (WP)

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soulard: the ethnic heritage of an urban neighborhood

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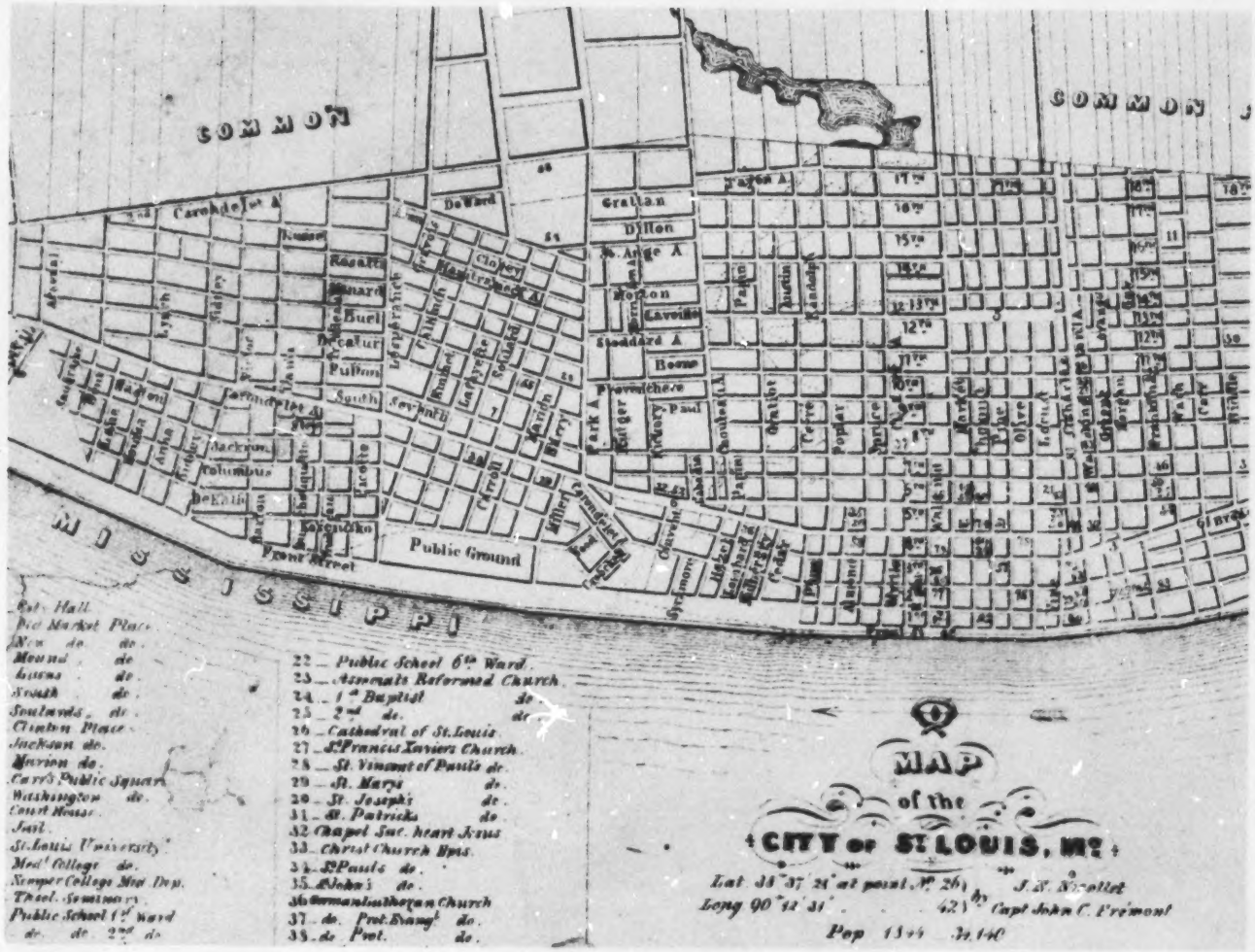
NOVEMBER 1975

COVER–1020 Allen, SOULARD
measured drawing by Joe Bilello
scale: 1"=100 ft.



credit: Heritage/St. Louis collection

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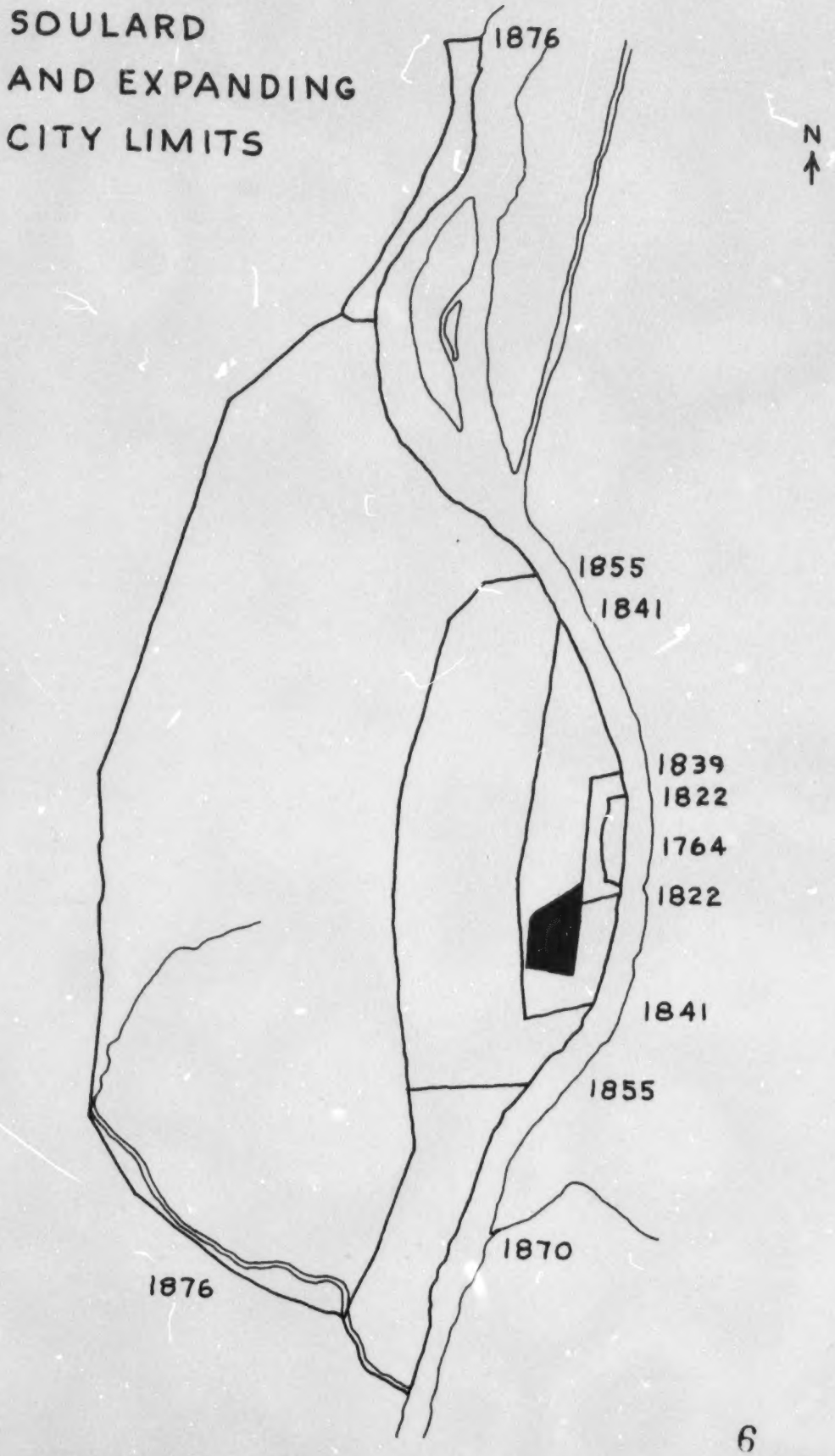
Prologue

Soulard, as it exists today, is only a portion of a nineteenth century collection of neighborhoods–neighborhoods built on land once used as common fields by the early French villagers. Freeways and industry now define and sharpen the boundaries of Soulard, obscuring historical patterns in the development of St. Louis. Once familiar names–discarded with old street signs, uprooted by the spade of Urban Renewal–linger in documents but fade in memories. La Salle Park: a part of "Frenchtown," a corner of "Bohemian Hill"–all Soulard? Kosciusko: Polish patriot, industrial park, or just a street in the subdivision of 1836 known as Julia Soulard's first addition when orchards and country estates, Chouteau's Pond, and El Camino Real began to give way to a river city on the move.

St. Louis in 1830 was still a small town. The families of the original French settlers had been joined by a substantial number of English-speaking Southerners, predominantly from Kentucky and Virginia, and a smaller group of pioneers from the New England states. The total population, including free Blacks and slaves, stood at less than 6,000, in contrast to Cincinnati, the largest inland city, with almost 25,000 inhabitants. By 1830, however, many of the political and economic problems which had contributed to the relatively slow growth of St. Louis had been resolved. The 1815 treaty of peace with England brought security to the Western frontier and inland waterways. The United States Army established forts to maintain that security, and St. Louis became the westernmost outfitting post for wagon trains opening up the countryside beyond the Mississippi River. The fur and Indian trade was no longer a high-risk, high-profit business directed by local entrepreneurs; the American Fur Company, controlled by John Jacob Astor, promoted an international monopoly with St. Louis supplying more pelts than any other market in the world. The completion of a new brick courthouse and the beginning of construction at the U. S. Arsenal a mile south of the city limits highlighted the start of a construction boom which would continue until the Civil War. Steamboats, introduced to St. Louis in 1817, provided regular service linking the Mississippi Valley to the Ohio River system. New wharves and warehouse concentrations mushroomed along the river on both sides of the old French village. Soon, steamboats would bring the first major influx of European immigrants and transform a frontier trading post into a cosmopolitan commercial center of national importance.

Some of the ingredients of this national center will be examined in the following study of Soulard–one of the "stepping-off" neighborhoods–from the 1840's to the present. We believe that the best way to understand the history and assess the future of Soulard is to consider the various ethnic groups, land uses, and sociological factors as a whole. Soulard is a rich fabric of traditions and possibilities. This essay provides insight into the complexity and vulnerability of that fabric.

credit: **Community Development Agency collection**


SOULARD
AND EXPANDING
CITY LIMITS
1876
N
1855
1841
1839
1822
1764
1822
1841
1855
1870
1876

germans

Germany in the mid-nineteenth century was a turbulent collection of independent provinces with serious religious and political problems. Depressed economic conditions, crop failures, and a temporary problem of overpopulation in rural areas increased the attractions of cheap land and political freedom in America. By 1829 glowing reports of the farming opportunities in rural communities close to St. Louis were widely distributed in Germany, and several emigrant societies left Germany for the promises of a new utopia in Missouri. Part of the dream was the establishment of a German state in America, a part of the dream quickly abandoned as leaders wrote back to friends and newspapers the following advice: bring money, sever oneself from Europe, do not plan on remaining a German in the United States . . . one must learn English.[1]

The Germans who traveled from port-of-entries to St. Louis between 1830 and 1848 included professionals, craftsmen, peasants, Roman Catholics, conservative Lutherans, Evangelicals, and Freethinkers. They spoke dialects based on region and class and were further separated by a rigid social structure, headed by secular and church landed aristocrats, aggravated by a long tradition of religious and civil wars. These differences and antagonisms would remain with the St. Louis Germans for many years.

The Irish, who preceeded the Germans in St. Louis by a few years, were more homogeneous; they were also more destitute and first clustered at the northern fringe of the built-up area of the city which, in 1830, stretched for 26 blocks along the river—a narrow band extending only to Seventh Street on the west. The heterogeneous Germans of the 1830's quickly dispersed to almost all sections of St. Louis. Concentrations, rather than enclaves, of Germans developed and are documented by the 1850 census, the first U. S. census which differentiates between country of origin.

The earliest German-speaking Catholics in St. Louis attended a special eight o'clock Mass at the Cathedral. In 1834 Bishop Rosati transferred the use of a small chapel on the Cathedral grounds from Negro Catholics to the German immigrants. The use of this building allowed the expansion of services to include catechism classes taught in both German and English. The chapel was destroyed by fire in 1835, and the growing German Catholic population, estimated at 2000 by 1838, returned to the Cathedral for services.[2] The burgeoning community of Germans on the near southside impatiently awaited a church home of their own.

Meanwhile, Madam Soulard continued to subdivide the family property, offering two lots in her second addition of 1838 for a church on the near southside. Bishop Rosati accepted her gift, purchased an adjoining lot of equal size, and quickly contracted with Hugh O'Neil (a local businessman) for the construction of ten houses which could be rented as income property for a new parish. The site was located in "Frenchtown," a semi-rural area just west of the river about fifteen blocks south of the Cathedral. The Soulards were among the families of the original French settlers who had moved outside the city limits and built homes amongst the orchards and mills. Julia Soulard's home stood on the corner of First Carondelet Avenue (Broadway) and St. Catherine (Miller); the Benjamin Soulard house, a two-story Greek revival mansion of soft brick, was built in 1837 directly across the street from the plot for the new church. (This house, the design attributed to Meriwether Lewis Clark, son of the explorer, survived until it was razed for the construction of the Third Street Highway in the 1950's.) The plans for the new church, Holy Trinity, and a Vincentian seminary were victims of the aftermath of the Panic of 1837; when funds ran out in 1839, only the foundation of the church had been constructed. The dense row of speculative housing was complete but vacant. "Bishop's Row," on a plot of only 300 feet by 50 feet, was just a few years too soon.

When Bishop Rosati left St. Louis in 1840 the town had grown to 16,469 and ranked twentieth in the United States. The incoming Bishop, Peter Richard Kenrick, a native of Dublin, arrived in 1841 to find a large debt on the Cathedral, no clergyman on the Cathedral staff who could speak English, and a high rate of bankruptcy among the Church's wealthy supporters. The city numbered between four and five thousand German Catholics for whom the new Bishop made repeated appeals to the Church in Cincinnati for the loan of an "efficient" German clergyman.[3] Fortunately, the gift of another wealthy and prominent woman of the city created the momentum which brought a church to the German Catholics on the southside.

The first Catholic church on the near southside (Our Lady of Victories—designated a city landmark in 1973) still stands at Third and Gratiot Streets on land donated by Anne Lucas Hunt, daughter of the Territorial Judge J. B. Lucas and wife of Captain Theodore Hunt. Our Lady of Victories began services in German a year before the St. Patrick's Day of 1844, when Bishop Kenrich laid the cornerstone for St. Vincent de Paul on the land given by Julia Soulard at Park and Seventh. M. Soulard lived to see the construction begin. Meriwether Lewis Clark held the commission for the design of the building, but recent research indicates that St. Vincent's was largely the work of a young architect who had just arrived from England, George I. Barnett, who would become St. Louis's most prominent nineteenth century architect.[4]

The consecration of St. Vincent's in 1845, before the amenities of a facade or tower, reflected the eagerness of a waiting congregation composed about equally of English and German Catholic families with a scattering of French, some from the old Illinois settlement of Cahokia who took the ferry across the Mississippi to attend services. The cost of the church, approximately $30,000, was soon paid in full.

credit: **Heritage/St. Louis collection**

In May of 1845 Bishop Kenrick announced the division of the city into four parishes: the Cathedral, St. Francis Xavier (northside), St. Patrick's (northside) and St. Vincent's. The two German-speaking congregations, St. Joseph's at Eleventh and Biddle and Our Lady of Victories on the southside (just a few blocks from St. Vincent's), were not true parishes but subsidiary where only German-speaking people could fulfill their religious obligations.[5] Parish schools taught in German and English were soon added to the St. Vincent complex. A parish cemetery was established a mile west of the church at the corner of Park and Jefferson. This cemetery served until the late 1870's, by which time 6000 persons attended services regularly at St. Vincent de Paul, one of many churches in an area which boasted dense residential development, diverse institutions, and profitable commercial and industrial enterprise. A highly competitive system of mass transit effectively linked Soulard to the rest of the city.

The third German church in the Soulard area was Trinity Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The origin of this church can be traced to the winter of 1838-39 when five ships left the port of Bremen in northern Germany. The destination of the 668 men, women, and children aboard was Perry County, Missouri, where they hoped to establish a Lutheran colony free from the religious persecution they had experienced in their native state of Saxony. Disaster struck one ship just off the coast of France; the other four landed safely in New Orleans. The weary passengers journeyed up the Mississippi River to St. Louis. Some went on to Perry County, but many remained in the city.

The Saxons, as they were called, were greeted with open hostility by many of the St. Louis residents, including their own countrymen. There was no Lutheran church in the city. The only citizens to publicly welcome the new arrivals were the Episcopalians of Christ Church who offered their basement as a temporary place of worship for the Saxons. The fledgling congregation received a setback in 1841 with the death, from typhoid, of their pastor O. H. Walther. His brother, who had accompanied the group settling in Perry County, was called back to St. Louis.

Within a year after the arrival of Reverend Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, the Lutherans decided to build a church, choosing a site close to the construction of St. Mary of Victories. The Saxon church, a small Greek revival building, was completed in 1842 on a 50 x 60 foot lot on Lombard between Third and Fourth Streets. (Formerly adjacent to the present MacArthur Bridge, it is now demolished.) One year later the congregation drafted a constitution. "This handwritten document was somewhat novel for its time; while adhering to strict principles of Lutheran orthodoxy, it placed the power of the church in the hands of the laymen, an innovation certainly in keeping with the democratic country in which they were now living."[6] *Der Lutheraner*, which began printing production in the basement of the Lombard St. church in 1844, was distributed to ministers of like convictions throughout the countryside. This paper, reflecting the views of Rev. Walther, a man many believe to be the Father of Lutheranism in America and the greatest Lutheran theologian since Martin Luther, led to the decision to establish the Missouri Synod.

Concordia Seminary, which today is beset by serious doctrinal discord, began in 1849 when a little seminary with only one teacher moved from Perry County into St. Louis. Most of the Missouri Synod pastors preaching today from pulpits throughout the world received their training at Concordia. The Gesangbuch, a collection of hymns compiled by Rev. Walther to take the place of the assortment of song books brought over by the immigrant congregation, remains the official German language hymnal of the Missouri Synod with only minor revisions.[7] Thus, within a decade of their arrival in Missouri the Saxons had embarked upon projects of national import.

The congregation continued to expand. Day schools established in the early years became crowded, and other schools were opened. By 1850 the main school was operating in the church basement, a second school had been opened at Washington and Eighth, and a new school was opened on the grounds of the church cemetery in South St. Louis. Within five years the fourth school was dedicated at Eighth and Barry and a fifth constructed on Cedar Street. The church building on Lombard could not contain the congregation. Wealthier members purchased a tract of land on Fulton (Eighth) and Lafayette (Soulard) for the sum of $11,725 and presented it as a gift to the congregation. "The same members then subscribed $17,000 to

a building fund of $113,000 (a large sum even today); others donated and subscribed; some even mortgaged their homes so that the structure would be debt-free on the day of the dedication."[8]

Dedicated in late 1864 in the midst of the Civil War, Trinity Lutheran, with a seating capacity of 1400, became a mecca for visiting Lutherans and all who loved fine buildings. Trinity was the home of the Concordia Verlag (1869)–the well known Concordia Publishing House, the Walther League, and the Lutheran Laymen's League. Meetings and conventions affecting Lutheranism throughout the world convened at Trinity in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The tornado of 1896 devastated the church, but a strong-willed congregation reconstructed the building within the year. Another splendid new German church building, not yet mentioned, was a victim of the same storm.

Eighth St. looking north toward Trinity Lutheran Church credit: **Robert Pettus for Heritage/St. Louis**

credit: **Heritage/St. Louis collection**

The history of Saints Peter and Paul Church begins in 1849, the year of the levee fire and the worst of the cholera epidemics. One year later, at mid-century, the U. S. Census placed St. Louis as the sixth ranking city in the country with a population of nearly 80,000. Of this number by far the largest group of foreign-born was German: 22,340 as compared to the second largest group, the Irish, with 9,719. Ward 1, Chouteau south to the city limits (Arsenal), had the heaviest concentration of Germans: 64.6 per cent constituting 36.8 per cent of the total number of Germans in the city. The success of the Germans in Soulard can be measured by the amount of investment in real estate: almost 50 per cent of the real estate in Ward 1 was German-owned, more than triple the percentage for any other ward in the city. Ward 2, which included the German-speaking St. Mary of Victories, had become a Ward of first residency for Germans (Olson).[9] The establishment and growth of Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church reflected the rapid southwesternly movement of Germans into the Soulard subdivisions.

Saints Peter and Paul parish began with two small frame buildings (the church and priest house) at Seventh and Allen; a one-story residence on Geyer served as a temporary school. A brick church, consecrated in 1853, soon replaced the frame structure. A debt of $20,000 awaited the second pastor, Father Goller, as he assumed his duties in 1857. Father Franz Goller provided leadership and remarkable continuity for the next fifty-two years during which time Saints Peter and Paul became the focal point for German-speaking Catholics in Soulard.

Further expansion of the physical plant, which would eventually cover an entire city block, began in 1859 with the construction of the Sister's School. The school opened that same year with 200 girls and 100 boys enrolled in classes. Sodalities, altar societies, death benefit plans, charities for orphans, dramatic clubs, and a reputation for musical excellence were well established before the decision in 1873 to build a magnificent new church. The building, without tower, was consecrated in late 1875; the debt of $92,000 did not include pews and a new organ, which were installed a few years later. Yet, in 1887 Father Goller announced at Mass that the entire church debt had been paid with a balance of $10,000 in hand. Scharff, in his classic four-volume history of St. Louis written near the close of the century, gives valuable insight into the contemporary perception of the community:

"This church seats 3000 persons, and the cost in 1875 was $200,000. This debt was paid off without resorting to any raffle, bazaar, or fair. There were no wealthy families in the parish, and membership (practically all German) was made up of working people."[10] By Christmas Mass in 1895, just a few months before the devastating cyclone, Saints Peter and Paul was complete with tower, windows from Innsbruck, frescoes, Stations of the Cross from Germany, and electric lights. Thirteen hundred and ninety-one children attended the thriving parish schools.

Father Goller was a national leader in parochial education. His support of the need for a parochial school in every parish convinced the Third Plenary Council meeting in Baltimore in 1884 to issue a decree making an elementary school obligatory in every American parish.[11] In 1897 Saints Peter and Paul became the first parish in the Archdiocese of St. Louis to offer high school education for its parishioners. Father Goller was a strong supporter of the "Amerika" (a pioneer Catholic-German newspaper), a leader in the Central Verein for Catholic social work, and one of the founders of the Leo House, a Catholic Hotel in New York for German immigrants. His death in 1910 marked the end of an era not only for Saints Peter and Paul but for the German Catholic community in St. Louis.

The First World War brought conflicts within the German population and hostility from without. Saints Peter and Paul sent 330 young men from the parish, but anti-German sentiment was not easily dispelled in a city where German street names were hurriedly being replaced.

After the War the leadership of the parish passed through a bewildering number of priests. By the time of the Depression, Saints Peter and Paul was in trouble. The cost of maintenance and repairs to the physical plant could not be met by the congregation. The numbers of children enrolled in the parochial schools continued to decline until the parish dropped all tuition charges in an attempt to keep the parents from "succumbing" to free public education. A "Homecoming" celebration was in-

augurated in 1936 in an effort to hold at least the financial support of the many members who had left the neighborhood. Considerable money was expended on redecorating and "modernization" (electric bell ringers, an electric organ) in a parish hard hit by financial concerns. In 1938 a credit union, still in existence, was established to facilitate small loans to parishioners; that same year the high school was closed for lack of funds. Eight years later the high school buildings were razed and the land covered by asphalt. The conclusion of the One Hundred-Year booklet, printed in 1949, includes the following charge:

"Let us not close our history, but by harder work and greater sacrifice in a more worldly and pagan time make our accomplishments worth the recording in time and eternity."[12]

credit: **Robert Pettus for Heritage/St. Louis**

Saints Peter and Paul, after 100 years in Soulard, stood in the midst of a neighborhood no longer populated by descendants of the families who built the church. The neighborhood was slated for demolition and reconstruction. The spires of Saints Peter and Paul and other ethnic churches of the nineteenth century towered above the quaint, tightly-knit, small scale red brick residences and corner stores. Soulard was old. Much of the housing stock was built before the Civil War. The recollections of Julius T. Muench evoke the optimism and pride of the builders.

"With that characteristic longing to own a share of the soil, the first savings of the German wage earner or small merchant in the towns and cities, were almost inevitably invested in real estate. The ground was usually paid for in cash and a loan secured to put up the building. These buildings in St. Louis were all of one pattern; (sic) two story brick structures flush with the sidewalk, with a short flight of stone steps leading to the front door and access to the second story by means of a rear outside stairway. Frequently, there was a second building constructed in the same way, abutting on the alley, with a bricked courtyard, ornamented with potted oleanders in the summer. The owner lived in one flat with his family and rented out the balance. It was the husband's function to earn the money and bring it home to the wife, and the wife collected the rents and looked after taxes and repairs. All this made for stability, and it also made the St. Louis Germans the heaviest taxpayers in the community, on the basis of actual wealth.[13]

Variations of the plan described by Muench include a type found in few locations outside of St. Louis: a four family flat with the only access to all apartments passing through a tunnel-like open corridor ("mousetrap"), stretching from the street through the center of the house to rear stairs and porches.[14]

credit: **Robert Pettus for Heritage/St. Louis**

A similar plan, shown on cover, substituted a narrow gangway between buildings. The house built on the rear of the lot, "alley house," was often built first; then rented, as owners moved to more substantial units constructed on the street frontage. (The two houses on Eighth next to Trinity School are a case in point.)

credit: **Heritage/St. Louis collection**

After the Civil War some of the more prosperous citizens built town houses and an occasional mansion on the higher ground along State and Summer Streets (now Twelfth and Thirteenth) and in the remaining open tracts in the present La Salle Park area. *Compton and Dry*, published in 1875, shows this clearly and notes the family names of residents in the semi-private places near Chouteau.[15] The segregation of the city into place of residence–place of occupation was still in the future. Home, business, and pleasure were intertwined–especially in the realm of the brewing art.

Germans arriving in St. Louis found a tradition which could welcome an expansion of a culturally accepted pastime and avocation. Inns were an esteemed part of the St. Louis fabric since the time of the first French settlers. Running an inn was a vocation associated with the best known and most respected families in the Territory. Taverns had been the scene of political caucuses, court sessions, and even the formation of new towns and counties.[16] St. Louis taverns soon became the meeting spots for the new arrivals; "beer was regarded as a mild, healthful beverage, often recommended as a temperate drink to replace the more ardent spirits."[17] The first of the many German singing societies was organized by a group of men from the Washington Brewery relaxing at a St. Louis inn.

The network of underground caves, a geological gift to the city, was exploited by the early breweries. Ice, harvested from the river in the winter months and stored in the caves, kept temperatures cool enough in the summers to prevent spoilage. Until the 1860's with the advent of artificial refrigeration, breweries were small-scale operations employing a high percentage of unskilled labor. Men, rather than steam or electricity, supplied the power; women were employed to wash and fill bottles and mend grain sacks. At the top of the work force were the skilled brewers and maltsters followed by coopers, blacksmiths, and draymen. Breweries were often family businesses with the owner's mansion located on the premises. The business office, cooperage, blacksmith shop, bottling works, and storage sheds formed a backdrop for the tower of the brewhouse. Gravity flow remained the mainstay of the brewing process even after the introduction of mechanical power; the brewhouse tower became taller and taller, and expansion buildings began to express the cultural background of the owner and symbolize the success of the firm.[18]

Of the many breweries once located in Soulard, only Anheuser Busch endured the rigors of competition, the lure of expansion and the paroxysm of Prohibition; it has emerged as the fourth most highly regarded investment in the Food Industries of the entire United States. Today, Anheuser Busch has plants throughout the country; the Soulard operation covers seventy city blocks and employs approximately five thousand employees, most of whom do not reside in the neighborhood. In 1888 much of the payroll of over half a million dollars was re-invested in the neighborhood. Over 1200 workers were employed; many lived in the newly built townhouses on Twelfth and Thirteenth Streets. While the owner's mansion was the only house on Busch Place, his beer (available far beyond the city limits) was featured not only at corner bars and elegant restaurants, but at many of the ubiquitous "summer gardens" scattered throughout the city.[19]

Nineteenth-century Germans in St. Louis organized a multitude of societies (vereins) for economic benefits, cultural activities, and socializing. Many of the vereins were benevolent aid societies, a forerunner of insurance companies, offering workman's compensation in case of illness and family benefits upon death. Provincial societies, lodges, and craft unions also offered such benefits. Singing societies were the most successful and long-lived of the various cultural groups. The Turnvereins institutionalized physical exercise and body building as a requirement for patriotic ideals and character development (see Feature). Local German newspapers published accounts of St. Louis activities, editorialized on national politics, and fought among each other.

But all was not singing and gemutlichkeit. St. Louis, like most American cities of the era, experienced periods of active Nativism. Anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant, and anti-Union elements all contributed to prejudice and unrest which often erupted with volunteer fire companies or the frequent and mismanaged local elections.[20] Meanwhile, new groups of immigrants had arrived in Soulard.

Turnvereins

"At the turn of the century when the world was at peace and life was mellow the turnvereins flourished in St. Louis. The gymnastic societies sponsored lectures, debates, and concerts. Their program included singing and dramatic sections, a Saturday morning German School, and an extensive library. The turnverein was also a social center for its members. Dances and masked balls and entertainments were held at the hall. Picnics were frequent in the summer time."[21]

By the time of the Civil War, the Turners were a national organization. Based on ideas repressed in early nineteenth century Germany, the Turner movement spread throughout cities and towns in the United States as more and more political refugees (the 48'ers) from the abortive revolutions in mid-nineteenth century Germany chose emigration. The first Turnverein in St. Louis was organized in 1850 as a physical culture society. As the threat of war increased, the vereins throughout the country reorganized as militia companies. The St. Louis chapter was the first to do so, transforming the Turner Hall on Tenth north of Market into an arsenal where Turners practiced and conducted drills daily in preparation for the approaching conflict.

St. Louis Germans organized four regiments, encamped at the Arsenal on the southside, and provided the balance in favor of the Union in the first and only Civil War battle in the city.

The proliferation and location of the vereins in St. Louis provide valuable demographic information on the movement of Germans within the city. The Southside Turnverein in Soulard (1869) was followed by the Concordia, Thirteenth and Arsenal, in 1875. The Southside, at Tenth and Carroll, was built in the densely populated, pre-Civil War part of Soulard; Concordia, now demolished for freeway construction, sprang up in an area just outside the limits of this study, again reflecting the movement westward and southward. Turner halls constructed after this date continue the trend:

1879 West St. Louis Turnverein – Beaumont and Morgan
1887 Schweizer National Turnverein – Ninth and Allen
1891 Rock Springs Turnverein – Boyle and Chouteau
1893 South West Turnverein – Potomac and Ohio
1894 Tower Grove Turnverein – Grand and Juniata

In 1878, the year the National Convention transferred the seat of the National Board of Directors from Chicago to St. Louis, Southside St. Louis membership was 477; the new Concordia branch had attracted 426 to its ranks.

Concordia was chosen as the site of the 1890 meeting to discuss a resolution making physical culture a part of the regular course of study in the St. Louis Public Schools. The Board of Education, headed by Richard Barthold, prominent Turner and later U. S. Congressman for twenty-two years, agreed to a proposal whereby the Turners would furnish free instructors in six schools for the remaining part of that school year. Instruction was limited to fifteen minutes, twice a week in the regular classrooms. Within months, the teachers were given special appointments with a salary of $2.50 per day. Gradually, appointments to faculties became full-time positions, and gymnasiums were included in the plans for new schools. (The Golden Jubilee booklet, 1912, remarked with some satisfaction that the children of societies and churches, antagonistic for years to anything fostered by the Turners, now learned physical culture through the public schools.) In 1889, the Turners, along with the prestigious ladies of the Wednesday Club, initiated the movement to create public playgrounds in St. Louis.

The Golden Jubilee document, written on the eve of World War I, reported the expense of the Turner Saturday German Schools at $7000; two additional schools to be opened in 1912 added an estimate of $5000 more to the Turner budget. The Jubilee closed with a statement which acknowledged that while the language may fade from everyday use, "the German spirit of physical culture, that most essential step to bodily health and strength, is deep-rooted and will survive. Mens sana in corpore sano.[22]"

This attempt to educate the second and third generation in the native tongue was soon to fall from favor. Assimilation had progressed far even before the outbreak of hostilities in Europe.

bohemians

The ancient kingdom of Bohemia, a Slavic country in Central Europe ruled by the Hapsburg empire based in Austria, was surrounded on three sides by German principalities. A long history of political and religious unrest came to a head in 1848 and provided the first significant number of Bohemian immigrants in St. Louis. During the 1850's and 1860's a great number of Bohemians landed at New Orleans and came up the Mississippi River to settle in St. Louis, Chicago, Cincinnati, and farm communities in Nebraska. Exact numbers are difficult to estimate due to inaccurate reporting of country of origin. The 1860 census shows about 2600 Czechs in St. Louis. Some were political activists and newspapermen; others were from rural areas, attracted by the promise of free land.

The Czechs (Bohemians) arriving in St. Louis landed at the wharves on the southside of the city and quickly clustered around Ninth and Soulard (Lafayette) Streets. Few Czechs spoke English; but, as German was the official language in Bohemia during the Austrian rule, most Czechs knew some German. Early relations between Czechs and Germans in Soulard appear to have been congenial as Czech Catholics worshipped at the new German Catholic Church at Eighth and Allen, Saints Peter and Paul.

The Czech community in St. Louis developed according to the internal divisions that had existed among the Czechs in their homeland. The Bohemians were culturally and linguistically homogeneous but deeply divided over religious issues. In Bohemia everyone was nominally a Catholic, as the Austrians imposed Catholicism as the state religion. Actually, many Czechs were followers of the Free Thought Movement which erupted in the revolution of 1848 with roots going back to John Huss, the fifteenth century religious reformer and martyr. The advocates of the Free Thought Movement were fervently nationalistic, anti-clerical, and anti-Catholic. Although the Free Thought and Catholic Czechs lived in the same area of Soulard, they developed different sets of institutions. Intermarriage between the groups and dual membership in Catholic and Free Thought organizations were rare until the end of World War II when the traditional enmity subsided.[23]

Although the major division within the ethnic community was between the Catholic and the Free Thought Czechs, there were other subgroups. A small group of Bohemian Jews settled in Soulard and soon owned businesses along First Carondelet (Broadway). The Bohemian Jews were influential in the founding of the B'nai B'rith Congregation at Sixth and Cerre in 1849, Ward I (1850) of Soulard; most of them also belonged to the fraternal organizations founded by the anti-clerical Czechs. In addition there were small numbers of Bohemians in Soulard who were members of Protestant churches and socialist groups.[24]

(Today these internal divisions no longer exist. It is common for individuals to belong to both St. John Nepomuk Catholic Church, the Czech national parish in Soulard, and one or more organizations associated with the American Czech Educational Center – an organization located on Lansdowne and Kingshighway and comprised of various clubs and lodges founded by the anti-clerical Czechs.)

Most of the early Bohemians were literate, and many came from middle-income groups. Elementary education (taught in Czech) was required in Bohemia. Higher education, usually taught in German, was expensive, and those immigrants with higher education but without a good command of the English language often experienced a temporary set-back in their standard of living. Once the immigrant learned English, he stood a good chance of returning to skilled or professional occupations. Some of the Bohemian immigrants who came to St. Louis were members of the "cottager" class in Bohemia, where they had farmed along with practicing crafts such as carpentry, tailoring, baking, weaving, and shoemaking. Apprenticeship to one of these trades sometimes occurred before departure. In St. Louis, tailors, cobblers, carpenters, cigar makers, and saloon keepers were well represented among the Czechs. Soon, many of the commercial establishments in the area were managed by Czechs; this aspect of business life helped to promote the continued use of the Czech language on "Bohemian Hill."[25]

For unskilled laborers, employment opportunities were plentiful on the near Southside. In 1854 Adolphus Meier from Bremen opened the St. Louis Cotton Mills at Menard and Soulard. The first cotton factory west of the Mississippi, the mill produced sheeting, yarn, batting, and seamless bags.[26] Klabasa (1928) mentions that when he arrived in St. Louis in 1860 almost all of the employees at the Laclede Flour Mill located at Ninth and Soulard Streets were Czechs. Other large industries in the immediate area employing Czechs and other immigrants were the Liggett, Hudson, and Butler's Tobacco Factory, Schneider's Granite Works, a lime works, a chemical dye factory, a match factory, numerous breweries, and the Soulard market. The geographical location of Soulard, close to the commercial and cultural center of St. Louis and the riverfront, was favorable to economic prosperity.

In 1854 the Czech Catholics built a small frame church on the corner of Soulard (Lafayette) and Rosatti (Twelfth). This inauspicious structure was the beginning of the St. John Nepomuk complex, the first Bohemian Catholic Church outside of Bohemia and the center of Czech Catholicism in the Midwest. (See Feature.)

> *. . . my great-grandmother, but her husband died with the cholera en route over. He died at sea, so he was buried in the sea, but when they came over she married the custodian at the St. John Nepomuk Church. My grandma and two sisters were born here and lived in Frenchtown, as they called it . . . we all went to St. John's School there.* (S-6)

The Catholic parish was the hub of life on "Bohemian Hill." Fraternal and benevolent societies, meeting the social and financial needs of the "Bohemian Hill" immigrants, complemented St. John Nepomuk Church. The first organization founded by the Czechs in St. Louis was a social club called the St. Wenceslaus Society which may date as early as 1843.[29] This organization broke up in 1854 over a conflict as to how much support the club should give to St. John Nepomuk. (The separation of church and state was a new experience for the immigrants. In America the cost for religion had to be borne by the congregation. State churches in Europe were primarily financed by the state.) From this date St. John Nepomuk and its auxiliary institutions became the organizational focus for the Catholics. The anti-clericals founded the C.S.P.S. (Desko-Slovansky Podporiyui Spolek), a fraternal benevolent society which specialized in insurance, at a tavern and boarding house on Ninth between Soulard and Lafayette. (The importance of Soulard taverns continues to this day.)

Though the figures cannot be verified, the best estimate is that one-half of the Czechs in St. Louis separated from Catholicism.[30] For these Czechs a multitude of organizations similar to those of the Catholics provided something familiar in a new country. Shortly after the formation of the C.S.P.S. in 1854, the Slovanska Lipa was organized for members with interests in literature and music. The Slovanie, a theatrical sub-group, produced Bohemian plays, glorifying national heroes and events, which became a standard part of Bohemian culture in St. Louis.[31]

Czech women often joined the work force in the traditional immigrant role of domestic service. In 1886 a group of fifteen Unitarian women formed the South Side Day Nursery for the children of working mothers. The mothers were carefully screened to make sure they were deserving of help. In addition to child care, the South Side Day Nursery sponsored lessons in physical culture, scheduled lectures, and presented operettas. The funds for this operation were raised by subscriptions to a publication called *Dress*. Circulars promoting activities at the center were printed in Bohemian and German.

In 1893 the *Post Dispatch* invited children and mothers from the nursery for a week's vacation at a farm.[32] A retreat in the country must have been a welcome change, as estimates of the number of Czechs living on Bohemian Hill at the close of the century run as high as eight thousand.[33]

Klabasa indicates a general prosperity among the Czechs in St. Louis which was temporarily interrupted by the Civil War. After the Civil War, more jobs opened up to the immigrant as the manufacture of leather, food, clothing, and building materials, along with the processing of iron and steel, developed into major industries. St. Louis ranked fourth in population and serious talk of relocating the U. S. capitol was in the air.

In the 1870's there was a small influx of Czech immigration into St. Louis. The relaxation of Austrian emigration laws in 1867 coincided with an attempt to attract immigrants to the U. S. In 1865 the Missouri General Assembly passed a statute promoting immigration in order to repair "the losses sustained through the desolations of war." A Board of Immigration, created to implement this statute, published booklets describing the amenities of living in Missouri and hired agents to welcome incoming immigrants. The first Board included a native of Prague, Frederick Muench.

The immigration of the Czechs into the U. S. continued without interruption from the end of the Civil War until the beginning of World War I, blending new arrivals from the motherland along with second- and third-generation Czechs born in this country. Most of the Czechs on "Bohemian Hill" were part of the so-called "old immigration," occurring before 1880. The bulk of the Czechs in the "new immigration" went to Chicago, Cleveland, and New York City. St. Louis received relatively few. Internal migrations of Czechs from other communities in the United States to St. Louis also occurred. Numerous interviews (Milcic, Reiner, Prokes) indicate that kinship networks were a factor in the migrations from both Bohemia and other sections of the United States. It was common for newly-arrived immigrants to live with relatives in St. Louis until jobs and housing could be secured. The C.S.P.S. members often offered new immigrants assistance in finding relatives, jobs, lodging, etc.[34] This prevented enterprising hucksters from preying on new immigrants and gave the C.S.P.S. an advantage in recruiting new families into their anti-clerical organizations.

An insurance and fraternal organization, the Catholic Central Union, patterned after similar organizations among the anti-clerical Czechs, was founded in 1877. The organization became national in scope in the next few years.

The second major Czech secular organization, the Sokol (Falcon), was founded in 1865. A gymnastic club modeled after a German-influenced organization founded in Prague in 1863, the Sokol conducted classes in the Czech language, offered an extensive program in gymnastics, and provided some insurance benefits for its members. Both the C.S.P.S. and Sokol became national organizations. In 1871 the Bohemian National Hall was constructed at Ninth and Allen to house the Czech secular organizations. As in many meeting halls for ethnic groups, there was a tavern on the first floor and meeting rooms above.[35]

The parish of St. John's numbered about one thousand families, creating overcrowded conditions in the church and school. Bohemians expanded to an area southwest of "Bohemian Hill," and a second Catholic church, St. Wenceslaus, was built in the 3000 block of Oregon in 1895. Nonetheless, St. John remained the focal point of the Bohemian Catholic life on "Bohemian Hill." The extensive damage to the church buildings resulting from the cyclone of May 27, 1896, was repaired in a few months.

Czech national parish

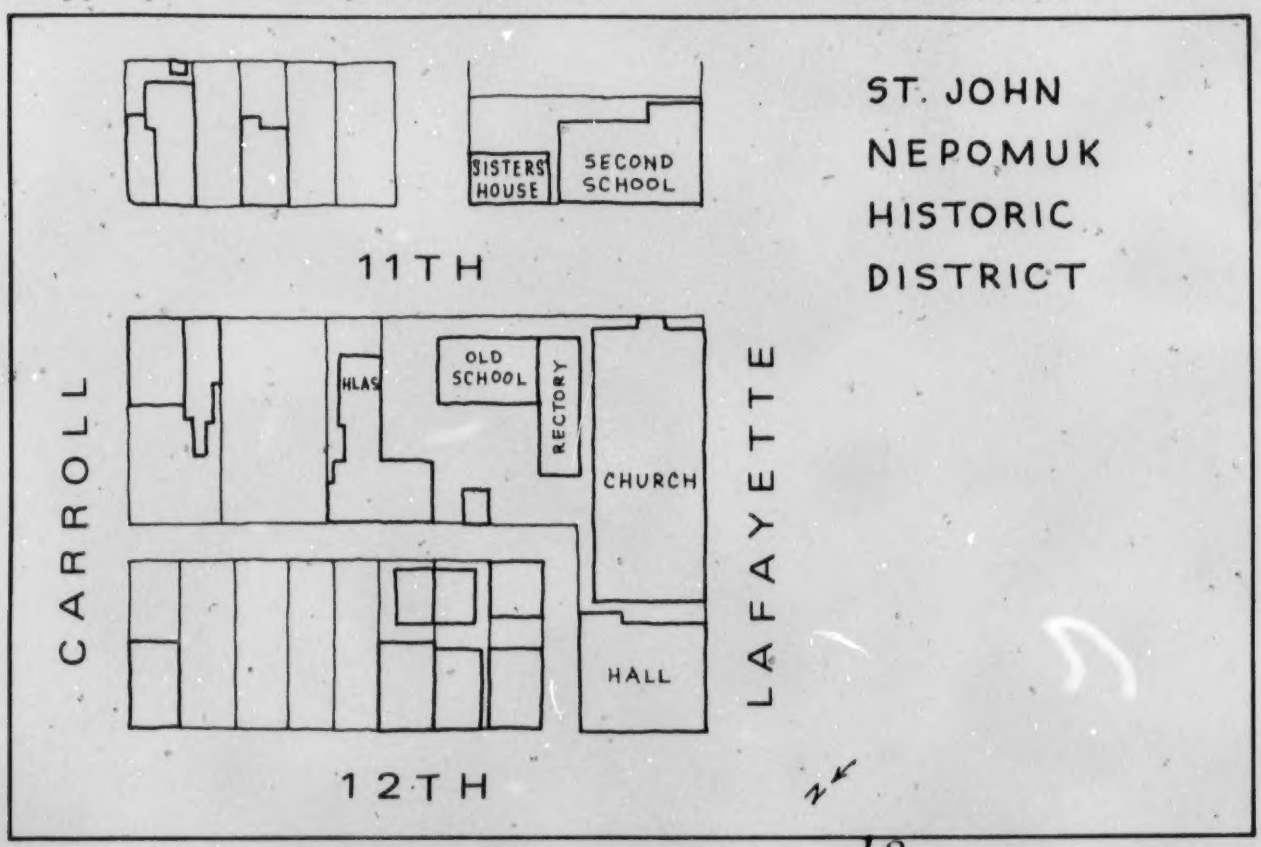
Seven structures comprise the Czech National Parish in St. Louis which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in the early 1970's. The buildings, clustered near Lafayette and Twelfth Street, are dated as follows:[27]

Print Shop (Hlas) 1884
Sisters House – 1848 and 1872
Old School – 1869
St. John Nepomuk Church – 1870
Church Rectory – 1870
Second School – 1884
Beseda Hall – 1892

In the first years of the parish, the congregation was led by its aggressive founder, Father Lipovsky. In 1865 pastorial duties were assumed by Father Joseph Hessoun, a charismatic man who for the next forty-one years would be the mentor of the Catholic Czechs in St. Louis. All of the present parish buildings, except the Print Shop, were constructed during the pastorate of Father Hessoun. "By the 1880's Father Hessoun had been able to skillfully compromise tradition with assimilation, encouraging his parishioners to associate with other nationality groups and demanding participation in St. Louis politics. But he maintained the Church and school as a refuge, continuing old world attitudes and customs."[28]

The Czech language newspaper *Hlas* (The Voice) was founded by Father Hessoun in 1873. The paper, printed in the small print shop north of the old School, was widely read throughout Czech settlements in the Midwest. The editor, Dr. Dostal, was a key figure in the formation of the Republic of Czechoslovakia after World War I. Masaryk, folk hero and the first president of the new country, met with American Czechs in the office of *Hlas* to discuss boundaries and a constitution. "In the office of *Hlas*, the map of Europe was changed by zealous liberators." *(St. Louis Globe Democrat.)*

> *Most of the Czechs are Democrats today. But years ago there wasn't many of them voting, and those that did vote were mostly Republicans. I'd say that 90 per cent of the Czechs today are Democrat . . . ever since Woodrow Wilson, who freed the Czechs from Austria-Hungary – one of his 14 Points. In Prague they had a statue of Woodrow Wilson, as a liberator of Czechoslovakia; the Union Station was named Wilson Station. The Nazis came along and tore that all down. It's not there anymore.* (S-6)



Well, we had our Czech plays, gymnastics, different lodges. There were no automobiles at that time. They never even had buggies or horses, but in the summer they'd sit out on the sidewalk with their can of beer and some pretzels or hot tamales. Life was good at that time. You didn't have to be afraid to walk in the streets, you know; and they were poor, but they were happy and contented, and they worked themselves up. It didn't take long. They were used to that from the old country – to own their own home. It didn't take long before they'd save enough money to buy that home where they lived. At that time, most of those homes around Soulard section were under leased ground – they could buy the house but not the ground; they had to buy the lease separate. So they first paid off the house, then they paid off the lease. Most of those leases were owned by the Allens. That's how Allen Avenue was named: after those Allens. Even when the Sokols bought the first Hall on Ninth and Allen Avenue, it was called – I can't think of that now. Anyway, they had to buy the building first, then they bought the ground later on, and a cyclone came along and left them only three walls. They were there three years and they paid it off. (S-6)

The large number of organizations that existed among the Czechs would indicate a well-organized community. This hypothesis was substantiated through interviews with members of the Czech community in St. Louis who lived on "Bohemian Hill" prior to and during World War I. Many interviews mentioned that it was common for an individual to belong to more than one organization. This often meant that "there was something to do every night." The multitude of organizations may also have been a reason that few Czechs assumed leadership roles in the larger St. Louis community. Leadership ability could easily be expressed through becoming an officer in one of the ethnic organizations.

Although isolated in many ways from the larger society, the Bohemians had secured a stable niche for themselves in St. Louis. Many new ethnic groups were looked upon with disfavor in the city, but the Bohemians were generally respected. The following quote from books discussing this period present a portrait of the Bohemian community which was widely shared:

> The immigrants from the dual monarchy live under the most favorable housing conditions of the non-English speaking races especially studied in this report . . . Many of the Austrians and most of the Bohemian residents are naturalized citizens and owners of property. The effect is immediately seen in the amount of repairing done and in the whole atmosphere, which is one of proud ownership. Such homes form the backbone of a city like St. Louis.[36]

An earlier account is presented in a book just published by the dean of St. Louis architectural historians – John Albury Bryan – in the 1975 volume entitled *Henry Shaw, Botanist-Benefactor, and George Ingham Barnett, Architect: Co-workers in American Culture.*

> One day a visitor and Mr. Shaw were walking through The Park when the visitor asked why so many Bohemians were employed there as workmen. Mr. Shaw replied that he found the average employer in St. Louis had unjustly come to associate the name "Bohemian" with a person who was not responsible nor dependable; and for that reason he felt it his duty to employ as many of them as he possibly could.[37]

Bryan gives no date, but as Shaw's health was extremely precarious by the late 1880's, one assumes the date of the purported conversation is parallel to the "Old Immigration."[38]

What was your mother's major reason for leaving Czechoslovakia?

Well, because when my father died, we never had any money. So our aunt told us to come over here, and they'd take care of us. Otherwise, we had it pretty good over there. She (my mother) wanted to move back at first, for a year or two. She didn't like it here. But then she got used to it like all the other immigrants. Most of them didn't like it when they came here because they didn't know the language, and they'd call them "Honkys" and 'Polacks," and you know how it was. They lived in poor houses, but clean houses. You'd consider that a ghetto that they lived in; but it wasn't a ghetto, because as soon as they got on their feet they'd buy that house, and they'd scrub the bricks, and they'd have it clean, and they worked themselves up until a lot of them were big men in this country. (S-6)

The Soulard branch of the Public Library opened in 1910 adding another dimension to the existing civic center of playground, public market, and bath house. Ninety-eight thousand, five hundred and forty books were circulated in the first year.[39] By 1913-1914 the Soulard branch contained books in sixteen languages and received seventeen Bohemian periodicals.[40] St. John Nepomuk maintained its congregation at 1000 members during the twenty-five years after the tornado. Out-migration, starting in the 1920's but temporarily slowed by the Depression, will be covered in a later section.

slovaks

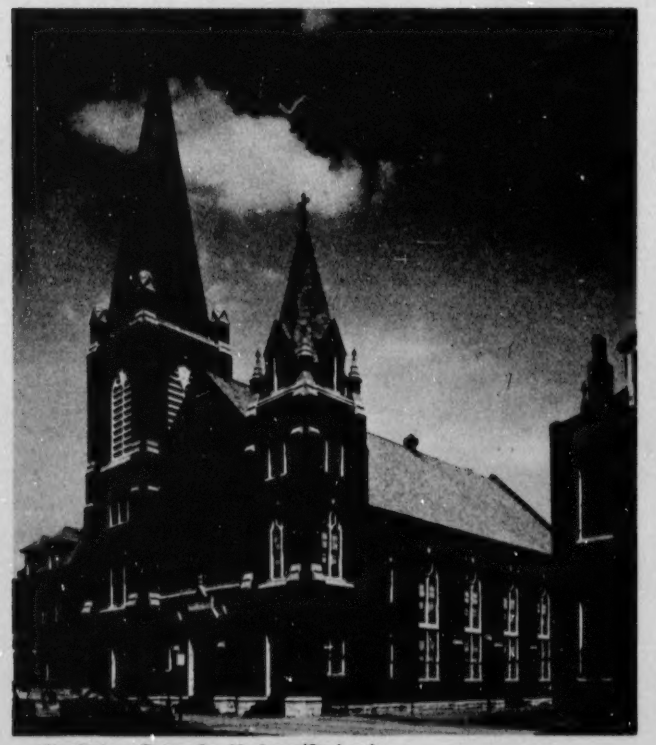
Slovaks, arriving in St. Louis in the late nineteenth century, settled close to the Czechs in the Soulard community. Although most of the Slovaks came to St. Louis from the eastern part of the United States, especially the mining districts of Pennsylvania, they shared similar language and history with their former neighbors in Europe. (After World War I the Slovaks, Czechs, and other small nations would form the new independent state of Czechoslovakia.) St. John Nepomuk welcomed the new arrivals, and Catholic Slovaks attended services at the Czech parish until 1898. In that year the Slovak lay societies convinced Archbishop Kain of the need for a Slovak national church. A Baptist church at Twelfth and Park, purchased for $5000 and renamed Holy Trinity Slovak, served the congregation for the next sixteen years. Nine different pastors, many who could not speak the language of the people, came and went during these first hesitant years. The parish school, begun before 1906 by the Franciscan Sisters, floundered. The first Mass performed by a native son did not take place until 1914. An occasion of great significance for the parish, the priest, Rev. John Hurcik, celebrating his First Solemn Mass, was the son of one of the founders of the church.

Holy Trinity entered a new period of stability with the appointment of the tenth pastor in 1915. Father Wenceslaus F. Linek was born in St. Louis in 1889 and baptised at St. John Nepomuk six days later. The house (in the 1000 block of Julia) where he was born has vanished; the site is now part of St. John's "Father Linek Memorial Playground." Father Linek attended the Czech parish school, Peabody public school, and Kenrick Seminary at Nineteenth and Cass. Under the guidance of Father Linek, the parish in St. Louis grew. In 1923, the year of the Silver Jubilee, Holy Trinity hosted a national convention of the First Catholic Slovak Union of Men. All this took place in the midst of the widening of Twelfth Street; the path of the new boulevard reached the church in 1924. St. Paul's Evangelical Church near Ninth and Soulard was purchased, remodeled, and dedicated on September 20, 1924.

Twelfth Boulevard, after widening, looking north from Hickory **Credit: Community Development Agency collection**

> The transfer of the seat of the parish was marked with a huge parade down Twelfth Street from Park Avenue, then east on Lafayette to the church. Organizations from other parishes joined in, and it was a great festive day for the Slovak people. Archbishop Glennon graced the occasion with his presence, along with a large number of priests. Father Linek preached both in Slovak and in English, and His Excellency congratulated the Slovak people on their progress.[41]

Only two years after the move, Father Linek was transferred to St. John Nepomuk; his classmate and childhood friend, Father Hurcik, returned to the Slovaks at St. Louis. The years since Hurcik's first Solemn Mass at Holy Trinity deserve special attention. After a short time as an assistant at the St. Louis Cathedral, Father Hurcik was appointed pastor of the church in Pulaski (Ripley County), Missouri. His duties included the five mission churches in a county where disturbances by the Ku Klux Klan were frequent. For eleven years Father Hurcik remained in Ripley County and is credited with the breakup of the Klan in the area. In 1925 he was called back to St. Louis to act as chaplain for the Old St. Mary's Infirmary on Papin Street. One year later he became the eleventh pastor of Holy Trinity Slovak in Soulard and remained there until his death in 1961.



credit: Robert Pettus for Heritage/St. Louis

Church records show a period of expansion followed by decline: an addition to the hall and school building was built in 1937; 1943 was the year of extensive redecoration to the church itself; an enrollment of only 32 pupils closed the doors of the parochial school in 1944; and in 1947 the church was seriously damaged by fire. Through these years the parish changed from a neighborhood base. With members throughout St. Louis and St. Louis County, Father Hurcik managed to make personal visits to every family once a year to impart the Epiphany blessing. After his death in 1961 the tradition of the parish was carried on by Father Albert Prokes.

Father Prokes, like his predecessors, was born in Soulard and baptized at St. John Nepomuk. His grandparents had come to St. John parish in the year of its founding, 1854; his father had been baptized in the first wooden church of that parish in 1863. At a parish meeting in 1961, Father Prokes outlined the problems facing the church. "He explained to the people that it was the wish of the Archbishop that the Holy Trinity Slovak Parish should continue, as long as the parishioners could keep it up financially; that he will keep up the Holy Trinity Parish as long as God gives him health and strength; that it was impossible to get a Slovak priest from another diocese."[42] The parish responded with cooperation, and meeting dates and social events were consolidated. In 1962 the old convent next to the church was torn down as insurance premiums were becoming exorbitant and the building was unoccupied.

The parish has dropped from a high of 500 families to less than thirty-five. Determined efforts by this small group of individuals – quilting groups, fund-raisers, picnics, and dinners – keep the spirit of Holy Trinity alive. The hall in the church basement still serves as a neighborhood meeting spot, offering informal conviviality and companionship. Changes in the neighborhood have contributed to the decline of the Slovak community; changes in technology have made it easy to leave. But a less obvious problem of perception has plagued the Slovaks and many other immigrant groups of the late nineteenth century. An unpublished manuscript of the early twentieth century, *The Slavs in Their New Home*, gives remarkable insight into the dilemma.

The author, a St. Louisan writing just after World War I, opened with an attempt to understand the failure of the "melting pot": the continuing existence of ethnic ghettos in the great American cities.

> Americanization, a term which we have heard used so much in late years, means more than teaching our newly-arrived citizens the English language and our own history. It means as well an effort on our part to learn their own historical background. Before we can teach, we must understand.[43]

Yet Americans used the term "Slav" to designate a widely contrasting group of peoples. Of the thirty-nine groups of immigrants recognized in the classifications then in use by the Immigration Department, eight were considered Slav. These eight, in descending order of their numbers in the United States, were: Polish, Slovak, Croatian and Slovenian, Ruthenian or Russniak, Bohemian and Moravian, Bulgarian, Servian and Montenegrin, Russian Dalmatian Bosnian and Herzegovinian. "This does not represent all the Slav nationalities, but is enough to bewilder most of us."[44]

Even the caricature of a Slav on the vaudeville stage would not be recognized; Italian and Jewish immigrants, "constantly under the eyes of the writer and reformers," were conspicious enough to have been stereotyped. The author remarked that only the Russians, who "have furnished the majority of our radical political agitators and Anarchists," have given Americans an unfortunate impression of Slavic immigrants.[45]

> The various Slav nationalities are separated by distinctions of historical experience, national self-consciousness, political aims, and often religion. In American communities they have different churches, societies, newspapers, and a separate social life. Too often the lines of separation are marked by antipathies and old animosities. The Pole wastes no love on the Russian, nor the Ruthenian on the Pole, and a person who acts in ignorance of these facts, a missionary, for instance, or a political boss, or a trade-union organizer, is apt to find himself in the position of a host who should innocently invite a Sinn Fein from County Cork to hobnob with an Ulster Orangeman on the ground that both were Irish.[46]

The author of the manuscript ascribed working habits he found acceptable to the Slavs – not difficult to deal with like the Irish, nor do they take to lines of petty street traffic, peddling small wares and fruit. "No work seems to be too exhausting or too dangerous for them."

While many Slavs appeared on concert programs of the day, most of them retained citizenship in their home countries: Poland – Paderewski; Joseph Hoffman and the De Reszke brothers, Czech – Jan Kubelik, Bohemia – Dvorak (the composer of the New World Symphony), Croatia – Terminel. Many of the internationally famous actresses of the "modern times" were Slav. The problem, for the author, was a lack of leadership in this country: "The great need among the Slavic population in the United States is that of leaders – outstanding men among the immigrant body who will make their historical background, their characteristics and aims known. They can be confident that when Americans know something about them, the proper interest and cooperation will not be lacking."[47]

This optimism was out of place. Quotas were imposed on immigration to the U. S. within a few short years. These quotas favored northern Europeans and the well-educated. The 1921 Act placed the first numerical constraints upon immigration. Each country's yearly quota was set at 3 per cent of the total from that country reported by the 1910 census. The 1924 Act brought a new formula computing a country's quota at 2 per cent based on the 1890 census with a clause providing for the use of the 1920 census after 1929. Changes in isolated groups as affected by 1920 Acts:[48]

Country of Origin	1921	1924	1929 clause
Czechoslovakia	14,282	3,073	2,874
Romania	7,419	603	295
Yugoslovia	6,429	671	845
Italy	42,057	3,845	5,802
USSR	34,284	2,248	2,784
Germany	68,059	51,227	25,957

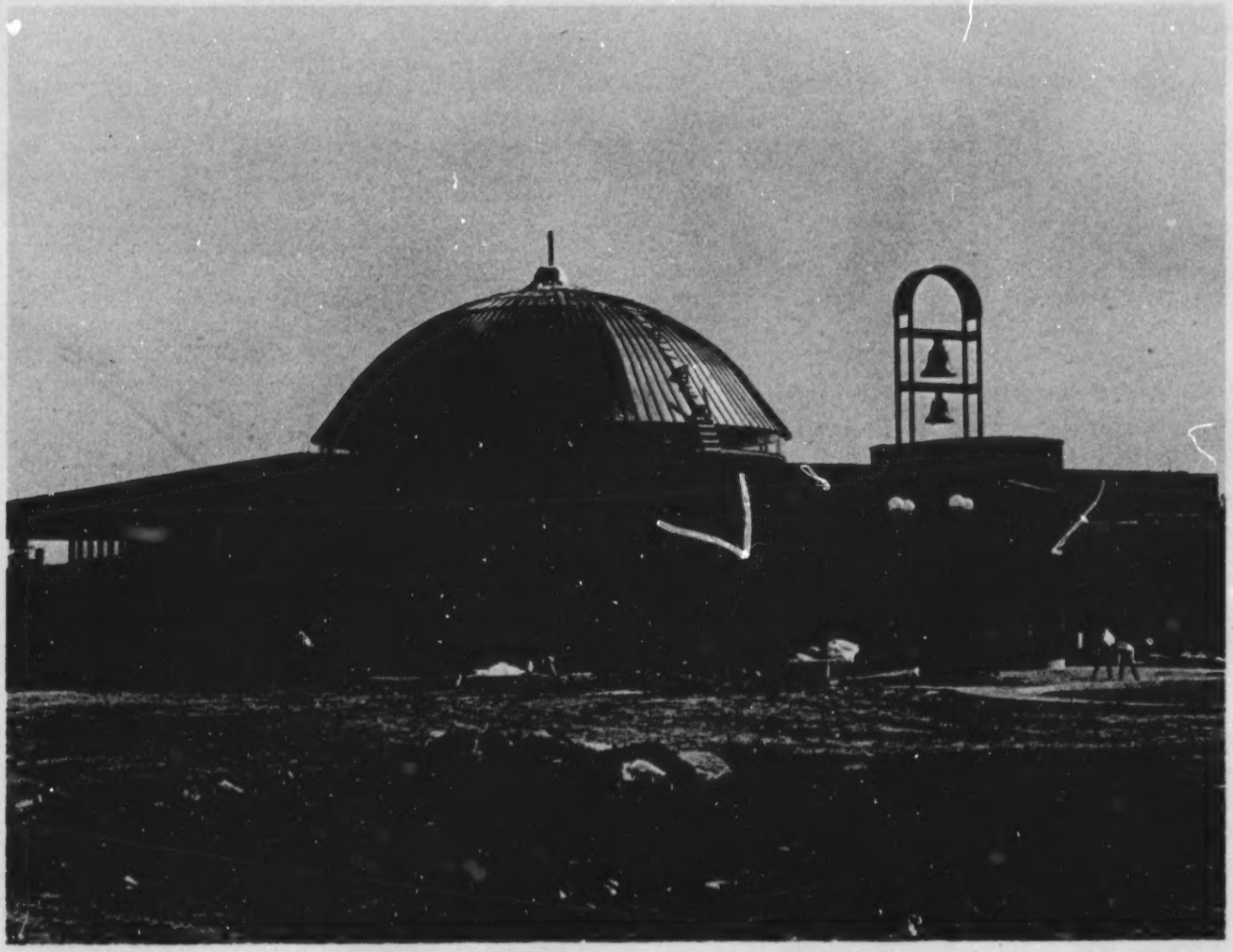
To be an immigrant was to be alien.

"St. Louis – The Most American City: Advertising agencies, advertiser, manufacturers, and distributors agree that the community which is most American has the highest standards of living. St. Louis has the smallest number of foreign-born of any metropolitan city in America. It also has the lowest percentage of foreign-born. St. Louis has fewer than 29,000 aliens – only 3.7 per cent of its total population." "St. Louis exceeds by far all other metropolitan cities in percentage of native-born whose parents also were native-born."[49] (In 1926 these statistics were very comforting to the authors of a *Rapid Transit for St. Louis* study presented to the Board of Aldermen. Today, we smile at the chauvinism and note that the growth of the city had started to fall off.)

Soulard received small groups of Eastern Europeans, part of the 3.7 per cent noted above, who formed ethnic churches and later dispersed throughout the metropolitan area. Ruthenians first worshipped in a chapel at St. John Nepomuk; in 1908 they purchased St. John's Episcopal at Dolman and Hickory and renamed the church St. Mary's Assumption. Lithuanians remodeled a Protestant church at Armstrong and Park. These church buildings became increasingly available for newer, less prosperous groups as the fashionable residential areas of the city moved to new, private places in the Central West End.

lebanese

The history of the Lebanese in Soulard is unique. Lebanese Maronite Catholics organized their first church in St. Louis (St. Anthony the Abbot) in 1898 in a stone building on Broadway and Poplar. The congregation of over fifty families soon moved west to another temporary location at St. Ange and Hickory in Soulard. In 1914 the Maronites established the parish of St. Raymond's at Ninth and LaSalle. The church at this location remained the center of the Lebanese community of St. Louis for over half a century. During this period the area around St. Raymond's changed from a thriving working class community to a mere remnant of the past surrounded by public housing projects, highway construction, demolition and the world headquarters of the Ralston Purina Corporation. This section of historic Soulard is now known as LaSalle Park and is part of a major Urban Renewal project begun in the late 1960's. At this writing the old Church of St. Raymond's still stands on Ninth and LaSalle (renamed Lebanon Drive in the 1970's in recognition of the active part the Lebanese have played in twentieth century development of the city.) Soon, however, the old church will be replaced by a new, elaborate St. Raymond's located just a few hundred feet to the east. The architecture of this parish will be evocative of the Eastern origins of the Lebanese and a strong statement of commitment to the future of the neighborhood.



credit: **Angela Walsh**

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croatians

The Croatians in Soulard remain the one highly visible neighborhood ethnic parish in Soulard. Croatia, a small Catholic country (pre-World War I) located on the Balkan peninsula of southeastern Europe, began sending immigrants to St. Louis as early as 1880. This first group settled south of Soulard near the Arsenal and worked as manual laborers, opening grocery stores, meat markets, or taverns. In 1902 the Croatians in St. Louis held a community wide meeting at Chouteau Hall, 2812 Chouteau. The purpose of the meeting was to organize the Croatians in St. Louis. Heated debate developed as to whether a Croatian Hall or church should first be established; the majority agreed on a church and fifty from that number started the St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church Society. This organization worked to raise money and maintain enthusiasm for the new parish. That same year the B'nai El Congregation, a Jewish synagogue on Eleventh and Chouteau in Soulard, was purchased for $10,500. This synagogue was converted into the Roman Catholic Church of St. Joseph. By 1904 eighty-two families were members. Efforts to start a parochial school began in 1906 but were not successful until a location at 915 LaSalle was obtained in 1910. The Croatian language was part of the regular curriculum for the school which numbered 135 pupils by 1912.

Not all Croatians wished to be tied to old world customs and language. Many were anxious for assimilation and moved away from their ethnic identity and the Catholic church. The early history of the Croatians was marked by dissension. "But among the Croats in the St. Louis colony there was always trouble. There wasn't an ideology new or old, radical or conservative, that did not find reception among some of the Croats."[50]

The growing spirit of independence for Yugoslavia reached the United States. Yugoslav Congresses were held throughout the country. St. Louis Croatians divided themselves into the following political groups: Nationalistic Croatians, Yugoslavs, and Socialists. Politcal discussions were fervent, often occupying more time and concern than religious matters.

In the early 1920's a new roadway was built to provide access to the city Free Bridge. Traffic problems were created for the school children who walked in procession every day to Mass. This, combined with the healthy expansion of the church and school enrollment, caused St. Joseph's to seek a new location. After several years of debate, the Croats purchased the old Ursuline Convent on Twelfth and Russell for $50,000. After this purchase in 1925, the Croats began to construct their new parish. A new church and hall were completed in 1927. Other buildings added to the parish-complex were the school, the convent, and the rectory. The debt on the church was retired in 1947. All of these buildings are still in use.

credit: **Community Development Agency collection**

Tamburitzan music

The strong music and dance tradition of Croatia has remained a ritual element in the lives of Croatian Americans. Today a Croatian attending an ethnic event in St. Louis, such as a Croatian wedding or a dinner-social held at St. Joseph's Parish Hall, can expect to take part in Croatian music and dance provided by tamburitza ensembles. The tamburitza, the main instrument used in Croatian music, was originally a Turkish instrument of the sixth century transmitted to the Croatians through shepherds and seamen.

Since traditional Croatian music is associated with dancing and group activity, it is often repetitive in rhythmic and melodic patterns. The tamburitza bands usually have dancers in their group called the "Koloettes." Croatian dance traces its origin to gatherings in the village squares of Croatian towns. Because of their circular orientation, these folk dances are said to emphasize a sense of kinship and community. The tamburitzan ensembles also perform Croatian songs along with their dance and music. Throughout the history of the Croatian settlement in St. Louis, tamburitzan music has played a vital role in the expression of Croatian culture. John Carr, currently the director of a tamburitzan group, stated the function of tamburitzan music: "The music keeps the Croatian people together."

In the 1930's tamburitzan groups became especially popular. The first-generation immigrants taught their sons and daughters. Croatians had just begun to disperse throughout the city, and a radio program was organized broadcasting the Croat language and playing traditional music performed by several young singers and musicians in St. Louis. Today, there are two radio programs weekly which still play Croatian folk music and broadcast bilingual news of relevance to the Croatian ethnic community. These radio programs provide a vital channel of communication for the dispersed Croatians.

Presently, there are two major tamburitzan groups in St. Louis: the Croatian Junior Tamburitzans and the Gateway Tamburitzans. The members in both groups are youngsters between eight and twenty-one years of age. These groups provide a means for the grandchildren of the original Croatian immigrants to gain a knowledge of the Croatian culture. Membership in these organizations also offer the opportunity for relationships to develop among Croatian peers, which is somewhat difficult today because of the dispersed Croatian community. The members of the Croatian Junior Tamburitzans visited Yugoslavia recently, and many youngsters met with their Croatian relatives.

Questionnaires were distributed to the members of the Gateway Tamburitzans consisting of inquiries about the individuals' family, background, ethnic activities, and personal feeling concerning their ethnicity. Briefly, the responses revealed that: their families encouraged them to play traditional music; they were familiar with the sound of the music before joining the group, having grown up with it; they are proud when they listen to and play Croatian music. They are aware that their musical style and activity distinguishes them ethnically: saying, the music is "different enough to be quite enjoyable" and offers an "escape from the normal everyday things that everyone else does."[51]

The challenge for the Croatians will be to provide organizations for the third generation when they reach adulthood and must leave the tamburitzan groups.

credit: **R. A. Faber**

With the kids, their Croatian ethnicity is just based on tamburitzan music. But I think they should be aware of the history and everything else. Because music is not the only thing that makes a Croatian a Croatian. I think it would be much wiser if we could, but we probably won't, organize a group that would teach music, history, and language, and so forth, which would be fantastic. But music is one very small part of this ethnic background. In the old time they had their children studying . . . The newcomers, most of the young people belong to a soccer club. They are centered around sports and so forth. (S-15)

credit: **R. A. Faber**

Today there are over seventeen societies connected with St. Joseph's. These societies were started by the early immigrants and have changed little through the years. They consist of four major types of services: insurance organizations, fraternal-social organizations, tamburitza musical groups, and special interest groups such as the United Croatians and the Vinodol. The United Croatians are made up of recent immigrants from Croatia who have an active interest in the politics of Yugoslavia. (After World War I, Croatia became part of the country of Yugoslavia.) The Vinodol is a fraternal organization composed of members who have family roots in the village of Vinodol (Croatia).

The history of the St. Louis Croatians is also rich in secular organizations. About 1894 the Croatians established the "Starchevich" organization, which was also the local unit of the National Croatian Union. Several lodges of the Croatian Workers Supporting Organization were started and, according to the Croatian author Nemec, the main purpose of these organizations was to help the Croatian people with their financial problems. The traditional "Croatian Day," which provided the material for a feature article in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* in 1930, was originated in 1910 by the educational club "Zrinjski and Frankopan."

During World War I, several Croatian groups were organized to specifically meet the war-time needs of the people. In 1914, the "Croatian Culture Society," the Croatian singing society "Freedom," and Branch No. 11 of the Croatian Union "Petar Svachich" united and formed a group which aided the Croatian veterans and their families. About this same time, the Croatians, with the leadership of Josep Marchnich, created the local "Board for the Croatian People Back Home in Poverty." Basically, this board collected donations for the needy in Croatia.

For the most part, the Croatian organizations did not work with other ethnic groups. The exception to this pattern took place in 1920 with the establishment of the "Sredisnje Board" in which the Slovaks and Croatians "concentrated on the celebration of dedication of the unfolding of the Yugoslavian flag and the celebration of Independence Day." A singular event took place in 1920 when the Croatians and Slovaks on this board organized a lecture open to the public entitled: "American Yugoslavian Relief." Due to organizational conflicts, the "Sredisnje Board" was later revised without Slovak participation into the "Sredisnja Alliance of Croatian Organizations in St. Louis, Missouri."

assimilation

The two decades following the turn of the century were basically prosperous ones for St. Louis. In 1904 the city hosted the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (St. Louis World's Fair) in Forest Park near Washington University. Attracting millions of visitors, the event was one of the greatest in the city's history. The Fair encouraged residential development on the north edge of Forest Park and the western suburbs of University City and Clayton.

The period between 1900 and 1920 also saw the beginnings of urban problems which would plague the city by mid-century. Many of the physical structures of the city were already aged and beginning to deteriorate. More important was the fact that the city's growth had already reached the limits set, perhaps irrevocably, in 1876. The need to rationally control urban growth was recognized. The St. Louis City Plan Commission was established in 1911, and a zoning law for the city passed in 1918 (later repealed). As in much of the nation, the dominant mood in St. Louis as people looked to the future was one of optimism.

The Civic League published *A City Plan for St. Louis* in 1907. Henry Wright, just beginning a nationally recognized career in city planning, prepared the document. The importance of the Soulard market area received special attention in the plan. Commenting on the population density around Soulard, Wright said, ". . . a park has been chosen as the center of the proposed civic center, and the buildings have been grouped around it." These buildings in Wright's plan included not only an enlarged market but a police station, a new public bathhouse, a model tenement, a model factory, and a new library. In addition, Wright suggested closing off Julia Street and creating a green mall to physically link the civic center with Carroll School and the Church of St. John Nepomuk which lay two blocks east of the market grounds. "In this manner, Wright would have created a neighborhood social nucleus."[52] The Soulard branch library, referred to in an earlier section, was built within a few years. The new major planning document for the city proposed a quite different solution for Soulard.

Between 1920 and 1940, the late nineteenth-century immigrants' children were reaching adulthood. The second generation, having lived through the hardships of existence in an ethnic community, had not developed a romantic interest in preserving their ethnicity. Rather, the second generation hoped to do "better" than their parents and were influenced by the American ideals of success, considering themselves Americans first. As a result, the second generation strove to be upwardly mobile in terms of getting better jobs and living in better homes outside of the Soulard area. This assimilation process, which took place among the various ethnic groups in major American cities, was a critical factor in the dissolution of ethnic communities such as "Bohemian Hill."

Aside from the desire to reap American opportunities, the second generation was also responding to the stigma of ethnicity. Outside of their communities, the children of the immigrants had grown up exposed to terms such as "Bohunk" and "Polack." This stigma certainly influenced the second generation to assimilate. As the future history will indicate, many second-generation ethnics did not completely lose their ethnic identify. By maintaining their secular organizations and church societies, the second generation were hyphenated Americans. (Hyphenism is essentially a term denoting "the stage when the immigrant and his children cherished a loyalty in addition to their Americanism . . . "[53])

In the days of the ethnic communities prior to the automobile, work and homelife were less separate. With the automobile, businessmen in Soulard could live in other areas of the city and maintain their shops on "Bohemian Hill." The development of chain stores such as Penney's and Kroger's minimized the need for the fragmentation of services that had existed in the small businesses owned by the neighborhood people; one trip to Kroger's could replace separate trips to a butcher shop, a drug store, and a bakery. Radio and the motion picture industry brought the self-contained ethnic communities that existed in St. Louis and in other areas into increased contact with the larger society. Prohibition produced a problem for many established ethnic halls and clubs, since these organizations largely supported themselves from the sale of liquor.

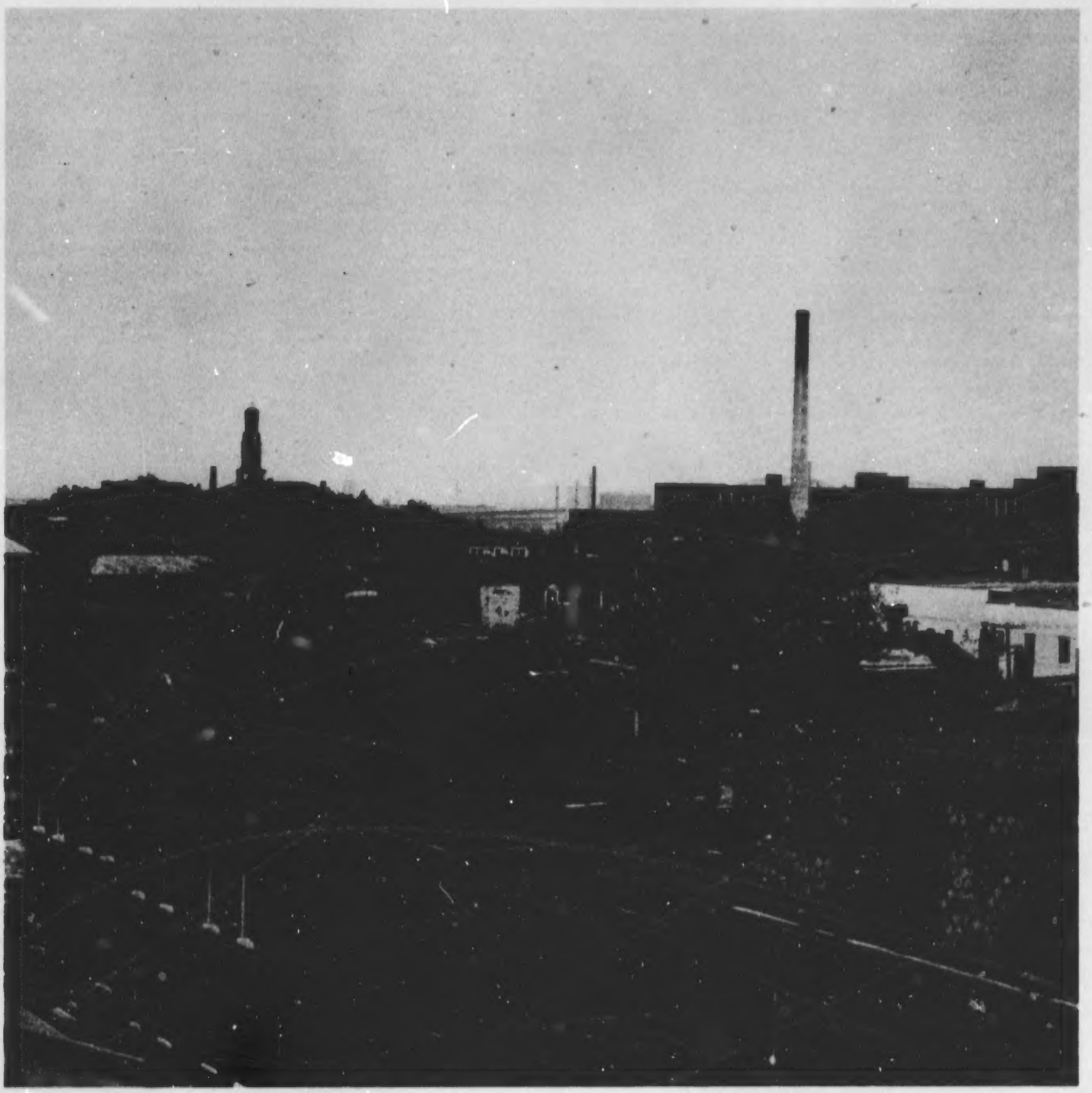
In 1926 a plan was proposed to merge the local governments in the city and county. This plan was passed in the city but defeated in the county. In 1930 a similar plan to unify these local governments into a federation by state constitutional amendment was defeated.

The Depression took its toll on the city, especially in employment. However, it tended to slow down assimilation, because people could not afford to move out of their ethnic communities. Many of the immigrants and their children were again forced to turn to the church for support. It was not uncommon for the ethnic parishes to hire their unemployed parishioners. These parishioners did repair work and helped with the maintenance and renovation of church premises.

Many second-generation German, Czech, Croatian, Serbian, and Hungarian men who had fathers from the old country served in World War II. Unlike their fathers, the immigrants' sons played an active role in the American war effort. Their participation in the American Armed Forces inevitably heightened the second generations' sense of patriotism contributing to their Americanization.

> *I was turned down in the First World War. I don't know why, I'm still living at eighty years, but they turned me down. I almost cried, but my son took my place and he was down in the South Pacific in the Second World War, and then my grandson was in South Vietnam. He was decorated for bravery, He's a captain in the Marines now.* (S-6)

Besides the impetus for opportunities in the larger society, structural conditions in the Soulard neighborhood were conducive to geographical dispersion. Most of the housing in Soulard was built in the nineteenth century. As late as 1940, the U. S. census indicates that 98.6 per cent of the dwelling units in the census tracts encompassing "Bohemian Hill" were constructed prior to 1919. Most of the houses lacked adequate plumbing and central heating facilities. Many families found it less expensive to move to other areas of the city than to attempt the substantial changes that improvement of existing situations would have entailed.[54] Soulard with its old housing and proximity to the business and manufacturing district of St. Louis was more transitional than other areas to which Soulard residents moved. The areas that most attracted the migrating Soulard residents were South St. Louis and areas of the county – Affton, Richmond Heights, Lemay, and others.



credit: **Community Development Agency collection**

The Comprehensive Plan for the City of St. Louis (1947) was typical of the prevailing bias of the period. The vision of an ideal separation of land uses all bound together by a system of major highways was critical to the 1947 Plan and totally outside the historical or existing land use and building types prevalent in the nineteenth century working class neighborhoods of the city. The decision to form policy in direct opposition to existing physical conditions was not made unknowingly.

The 1947 Plan divides the city into eighty-two residential neighborhoods, examines in detail the existing land-use patterns in selected neighborhoods, and arrives at three major conflicts:

1) Smaller off-tract industries scatter into older residence areas instead of grouping in well-defined areas.
2) Apartment houses scatter into single-family districts instead of grouping and creating their own beneficial environment.
3) Many stores and shops scatter into residence areas instead of grouping into well-defined centers.[55]

We believe that these "conflicts" formed the physical and social networks of most nineteenth century neighborhoods. Soulard developed around industry and commerce. Corner shops and bars prospered within easy walking distance of intermixed single and multi-family dwellings. This mixed land-use pattern was still basically unaltered in 1947. The 1947 Comprehensive Plan, however, proposed dramatic changes for the neighborhood:

"Soulard – Obsolete. Present obsolete areas must be cleared and reconstructed. This is a social necessity as well as an economic essential." The Soulard and Lafayette Park areas are treated together in a detailed reconstruction site plan. Among the important features of this plan are street and highway improvements and construction, underground garages, the grouping of commercial areas into orderly shopping centers, and the complete reconstruction of the neighborhood into super residential blocks, with a new street pattern to serve these blocks and discourage through traffic. "This is an area well suited for families of medium income."[56] (A version of this reconstruction plan was originally included in a federally assisted urban renewal project of the 1950's; the ultimate project included only the Kosciescko industrial district immediately east of Soulard.)

While the years immediately following World War II were ones of general prosperity and growth, most of the expansion in the metropolitan area occurred outside the city limits in St. Louis County. In 1950, the city reached the apex of its population growth as the census showed 856,796 inhabitants.

However, problems were emerging which would increase during the next quarter century. Many areas of St. Louis including the downtown became increasingly blighted. St. Louis was rapidly becoming divided into two segregated sections as the north half of the city became increasingly black and young and the south half remained white and elderly. Between 1950 and 1960 the city's population decreased over one hundred thousand to 750,026. As the wealth of the city declined with its population, the tax base shrunk, causing financial problems for city government.

The problems of the 1950's and 1960's did not go unchallenged. Governmental agencies at the city, state, and federal levels developed many programs aimed at reversing or containing the "urban crisis." By 1956 seven public housing projects had been constructed in St. Louis. Many stood on the former sites of old neighborhoods – "blighted" areas which had been cleared. The Third Street Interregional Highway (the forerunner of Interstate 55) and the Mark Twain Highway (Interstate 70) were opened, respectively, in 1955 and 1961. Interstate 55 was completed in the mid-1960's as was the Poplar Street Bridge, the first non-toll span across the Mississippi at St. Louis.

Unfortunately, in retrospect, it appears that the building programs of the 1950's and 1960's, which were offered as solutions to urban ills, created as many problems as they solved. To clear land for the construction of highways and government housing required the demolition of thousands of houses, many in good or fair condition, and the displacement of their inhabitants. The displaced, who were poor, could often not afford to live in the housing which replaced their previous homes. Even when they could, there was often a lapse of many years between the demolition of existing housing and its replacement, during which they were forced into other housing. Those displaced by new construction who were better off financially frequently took advantage of the opportunity to flee the city for the developing suburbs of St. Louis County.

As the decade of the 1960's progressed, a further problem – widespread mistrust of government – deepened the plight of the cities. Many governments, including that of St. Louis City, were faced with an increasing taxpayer resistance to the passing of bond issues and other proposals which would raise taxes. The attitude of those concerned with the future of the big cities often became one of frustration and deep concern.

1953 Soulard (foreground) before demolition for Darst Webbe project. credit: **Community Development Agency collection**

Soulard has been one of the neighborhoods in St. Louis most affected by highway and public housing construction. In 1950 Census Tract 23-D (now 1234), whose boundaries are very similar to those of present day Soulard, contained 6,044 dwelling units and a population of 18,492. The neighborhood was heavily occupied with only 32 unoccupied dwelling units in 23-D for 1950. Much of the housing was built by the original population or following the tornado of 1896. Over 5,700 hundred units had been constructed prior to 1915 and almost 5,000 were in structures containing three or more units. There was still a significant population of first- and second-generation immigrants as more than one thousand of the people in the census tract had been born in other countries.

The first widespread demolition in the neighborhood occurred in the early 1950's. The area bounded by Lafayette and Park Streets on the north and south and by Twelfth and Fourteenth Streets on the east and west was razed for the construction of the Darst-Webbe-Peabody Housing Project. The population of the area, many of whom were descendants of the early Bohemian immigrants, was forced to relocate. As many left the neighborhood there was an adverse effect on the Czech Catholic Church, St. John Nepomuk, located across the street from this housing project. At the same time, other residential areas in Soulard were demolished for the construction of the Third Street Interregional Highway, which opened in 1955. During the next decade more housing was removed as Interstate 55, completed in 1967, was constructed and widened through the neighborhood. Accompanying the widespread demolition was a reduction in money spent for repairs and maintenance. Property owners could see little benefit in investing in the neighborhood.

Urban renewal and highway construction have determined the present boundaries of Soulard. The residential neighborhood to the east of Soulard, Koskiusko, was the scene of St. Louis' second urban renewal district in 1960. The results were striking. In 1960 there were 2,796 people in Koskiusko; in 1950 there were 50. Kosciusko is now a commercial and industrial area. Interstate 55 completed the present boundaries of Soulard cutting off the neighborhood from the area west of the highway with which it had many historic ties. It is interesting to note that most long-term residents of the area remember that the remaining, western part of Soulard was considered Phase II of that project. Phase II was abolished at the request of the Seventh Ward Regular democrats.[57] (Rumor has it that the notion that Phase II will still occur persists in quarters of city government.)

It is almost impossible to determine the number of dwelling units in Tract 23-D demolished for government building projects. Much of the housing in the area was falling into stages of disrepair because of age and related problems. However, census data tell us the over-all effects in the neighborhood between 1950 and 1970. By the latter year, the number of dwelling units was reduced by more than one-half, from 6,044 to 2,708, while the population fell to 5,576, a loss of 70 per cent from 1950. Six hundred and seventy-three of the dwelling units were unoccupied, and only six of them were listed for sale or rent. Most of the others stood vacant with windows broken out and debris littering the floor. Often the interior had been gutted by fire or destroyed by vandals. By 1970, the progressive destruction of the housing stock was a major problem for Soulard.[58]

decline of ethnic organizations

The quarter century from 1950 to 1975 witnessed the decline and, in many cases, the death of the ethnic organizations which had played a vital role in the ethnic communities in Soulard before and after the turn of the century. In part their decline can be attributed to the movement, discussed previously, of the immigrants and their descendants into South St. Louis and St. Louis County. Perhaps a more important reason is that the functions these organizations were designed to fulfill were no longer relevant in the mid-twentieth century. The ethnic parish served as an institution which provided a cushion against the shock and sense of being alone, often felt by the immigrant families in a strange country, where they were unfamiliar with the language and ways of life. Here, the new immigrant could find people who spoke his language and were familiar enough with the city of St. Louis to offer him advice and other assistance in finding a place to live and a job. The familiar customs and values were to be found in the religious functions of the churches. With the decline of immigration in the 1920's, there was no longer a widespread need for a buffering institution between the new immigrant and the host society.

Some institutions found other solutions. Today the Sokol retains its emphasis on gymnastic activities, maintains the Vlasta ladies auxiliary and a children's summer camp at Imperial, Mo. The Sokol publishes a monthly newsletter which is distributed by mail to its members who currently number over four hundred. This Sokol publication, entitled *St. Louis Sokol News*, enables the Sokol members to communicate with each other on issues relating to this ethnic organization and their ethnic identity. Every month a Sokol member can expect to find the following types of articles in the *Sokol News:* meeting reports, editorials, gymnastic news, news about fellow Sokol members, historical tributes to prominent Sokol members, historical insights on the St. Louis Sokol, features written in the Czech language, discussions on organizational problems, announcements of coming events, and obituaries.

A content analysis of the *Sokol News* demonstrates that the Sokol members maintain a strong sense of historical identification. This sense of historical significance is especially expressed in the newsletter's sections on "Historical Tribute" (to members) and "History of Sokol St. Louis." The history emphasizes the actions of people as opposed to dates and events; the editorials make the history currently significant by restating the principles upon which Sokol was founded and suggesting how these principles can be implemented. For example, the following editorial *(Sokol News,* Nov. 1966, Vol. I) states one of the main purposes of the newsletter: "Our purpose is to increase your knowledge, not in math or science (this we leave to your children and grandchildren), but in Sokol ideals, principles, and history."[59]

The editorials in the *Sokol News* consist of four major themes: (1) the urging of group activity; (2) the restatement of the ideology of Sokol; (3) the praising of members for their various kinds of contributions to the organization; and (4) the criticism of members for their lack of cooperation. These articles function to reiterate Sokol's principles while reinforcing the members' participation. The responses from a questionnaire show that over half of the Sokolites come to the American Czech Educational Center for activities in spite of the fact that they have been dispersed into the larger metropolitan area. Sokol's summer camp for children is located approximately forty miles outside of the metropolitan St. Louis area; nevertheless, 10 per cent of the adult members visit the camp weekly, and over one-third go to camp monthly. Over one-third of the members' children over eighteen are also members of Sokol. In their attempt to learn the language of their grandparents, most of these children are enrolled in a Czech language school operated at the American Czech Educational Center.

Based on the active participation of the Sokol members and their children, the dissolution of the "Bohemian Hill" community has not adversely affected the Sokol's membership growth or activities. In fact, Sokol membership has grown since 1950. The Sokol members today can drive in their automobiles to the ethnic center, whereas once they walked to the hall in the Czech neighborhood. Thus, the Sokol has no obvious need for an ethnic neighborhood to maintain activities, ideology, primary group relations, and intra-group communication. Some cultural activities, however, have suffered.

> *The main difference is the old people are dying out, there are less and less original Czechs from Czechoslovakia, and the second- or third-generation Americans are taking over the whole thing. That's the main difference. We used to have at least two Czech plays a year, but we don't have it anymore . . . In the late fifties and beginning sixties, this is something that is disappearing.* (S-2)

Of the four Catholic parishes, only St. Joseph's Croatian has maintained its membership through recent years. The other three parishes have lost half or more of their members during the same time period. Besides losing membership, many of the activities and peripheral institutions of the parishes closed. At one time each of the parishes ran a primary school for the children of the congregation. Today, only the school at St. Joseph's Croatian remains open, and it serves primarily neighborhood children whose families are otherwise unconnected with the parish. Although St. Joseph's has maintained its membership and most of the Croatian organizations are still active, regular attendance at organizational meetings is often as low as 10 per cent.[60] St. John Nepomuk ceased publication of the Czech language newspaper *Hlas* in 1950 and closed the orphanage it ran in Fenton, Missouri, two years later. With a decrease in membership has come a corresponding decline in the number of activities of the societies and sodalities associated with the Catholic parishes.

Trinity Lutheran, the only non-Catholic ethnic parish still active in the area, has maintained a viable membership and an affiliated school to the present. However, it now serves other groups from Soulard and other parts of St. Louis, as well as descendants of the German Lutheran immigrants. In all of the churches, English has become the language in which most of the services are conducted. However, other languages – German, Czech, and Croatian – are frequently heard in informal conversations among the parishioners. As in most United States' cities, the ethnic parishes in St. Louis appear to be slowly dying out.

rural white migrants

As the influence of the European immigrants and their descendants has dissipated in Soulard during the last few decades, a newer group of migrants to the city has become increasingly visible. These are the rural whites who emigrated from areas in southeast Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky to St. Louis. This migration to the city has fluctuated; heavy during the early 1920's, it dropped off during the depression years, rose in the late 1930's and peaked in the 1950's.[61] Frequent attitudes toward this migration were well summarized in a study of poverty in the Soulard area written during the mid-1960's.

> That the move to the city is more a flight from rural poverty than it is a trek to the land of opportunity is also evident in the dissatisfaction with which many migrants view life in the city. Half of those who have been in the city twenty years or less said in response to a direct query that they did not like living in St. Louis. Sixty-seven per cent of all those who have lived in the city twenty-five years or less stated a preference for life in small towns as opposed to life in the city. Yet when asked why they have not moved to the place they said they would prefer to live, half of those responding gave wage or cost-related reasons for remaining in the Soulard area. Given the opportunity to earn comparable wages, many migrants would return to the rural area from which they came or to a similar one.[62]

Although many rural migrants do receive immediate economic benefits by their move to the city, their life experience in rural areas seems to leave them ill prepared for an adjustment to urban life. Often intertwined in a close-knit web of relationships with relatives and friends, the move to the city involves a sharp severing of ties and the loss of familiar social and physical environment. The problems that have been most often mentioned in conjunction with rural whites in northern cities are many and varied but would include poor hygiene practices, low commitment of the parents to their children's education, heavy drinking and alcoholism, a propensity for physical violence, the swelling of welfare rolls, promiscuity, poor skills for financial management, low job commitment, and a general unwillingness or inability to adjust to the regularities demanded by urban life.

While undoubtedly some of the above problems can in some degree be correctly attributed to rural white migrants, they have also been the victims of widespread stereotyping and scapegoating by other residents in St. Louis. The derogative epithet "Hoosier" does not refer to a man from Indiana in St. Louis, but to a person from the country. The region that many of the rural migrants call home is referred to as "Swamp East Missouri." An individual who was interviewed as part of this study told of a common effect of being labeled a "Hoosier":

> *... but most of the people from Southeast Missouri, I find, have a very hard time finding jobs even when jobs are good. You know, on account of I don't give a damn how much education you got, they still classify you as being a "Hoosier." You're from Southeast Missouri. It's just like being a "Nigger." . . . You fall into a category you can't get out of. You're just a natural-born "Hoosier," and that's the best you can make of it. I don't give a damn if you've been to, if you'll pardon the expression, Harvard. They just classify you as that class, and it's hard to kick over that image. Well, you know, they've got a twang to their talk that's very distinct. I know that. But when you go to look for a job, you put down where you're from and the interviewer looks at you and says "____, Missouri. Where the hell is that?" Well, you know what's running through his mind when he's saying that. They tell you they're not prejudiced; that they're not like that, you know. But you see the little cogs turning when he sees that town from Southeast Missouri in there.* (S-14)

In Soulard, many of the long-time residents, including the remaining descendants of the European immigrants, blame the country people for the physical decline of the neighborhood. In fact, until the influx of new young preservationists, it was the rural element who held what was left of Soulard together. Those rural immigrants who were able to purchase their homes as early as the 1930's were the ones who considered Soulard their turf and defended it against blockbusting.[63]

today

A potential strength for the city of St. Louis is the large number of neighborhood and community organizations. Composed of local residents and businessmen, these groups have usually organized around problems that affect all the inhabitants of a neighborhood. Although a few existed prior to 1960, the impetus for the establishment of most neighborhood associations was the "war on poverty" and related problems of the 1960's. By 1971 over ninety neighborhood organizations were listed by the City Plan Commission.

The activities of the associations are diverse. Like other types of voluntary associations, the activity level of the members varies greatly. Some neighborhood associations are consistently active in promoting their area's interests while others are little more than organizations which exist on paper. While some attempt to maintain their neighborhoods by urging residents to paint houses and mow yards, others have conducted lengthy campaigns to secure legislation favorable to their neighborhoods from city government. These organizations provide a channel for city officials to be kept aware of the opinions of the public they serve.

> *When I came here I didn't like the city. But I came to like it, and I think the thing that impressed me the most is I like the idea of the neighborhood organizations–the joining of the people together to improve the neighborhood. I think that this has come about in the last five to six years, this idea of strong neighborhoods. I think this probably is what is keeping the city right now, at least to a degree, alive. Otherwise the city is slowly dying. You need to keep the people in the city, and unless the people are attracted to the city by these neighborhood improvement organizations, the people move out of the city. I am not the expert on this, but to me it seems the organization of neighborhoods have taken a great deal upon themselves to try to improve them and have a certain pride in their neighborhood. To stay there and not to move out and at least try to bring new people into these old neighborhoods. This was one of the things that I was kind of surprised about.* (S-15)

Numerous problems have prevented the local neighborhood associations from achieving their potential effectiveness. The fact that most are based in a small area often promotes a narrow viewpoint which fails to see urban problems as existing on a city-wide basis or area-wide basis. By promoting solutions on a neighborhood level, different associations sometimes come into conflict or work at diverse purposes. Attempts to coordinate the effects of the associations on a city-wide basis have not been successful.

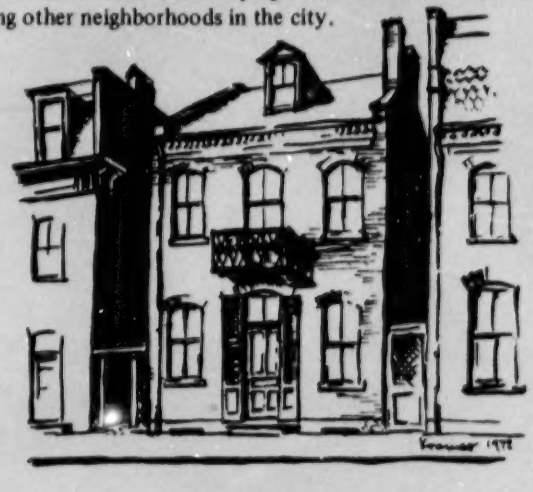
The neighborhood association that serves the Soulard area is the Soulard Neighborhood Improvement Association (S.N.I.A.). Created in the early 1960's by the Human Development Corporation to enable Soulard to qualify for federal funds, the association is presently composed of local residents, businessmen, church leaders, and property owners. The activities of the S.N.I.A. fall into two categories: sponsoring programs to combat the neighborhood's problems and promoting interests of the neighborhood before various private, municipal, state and federal agencies.

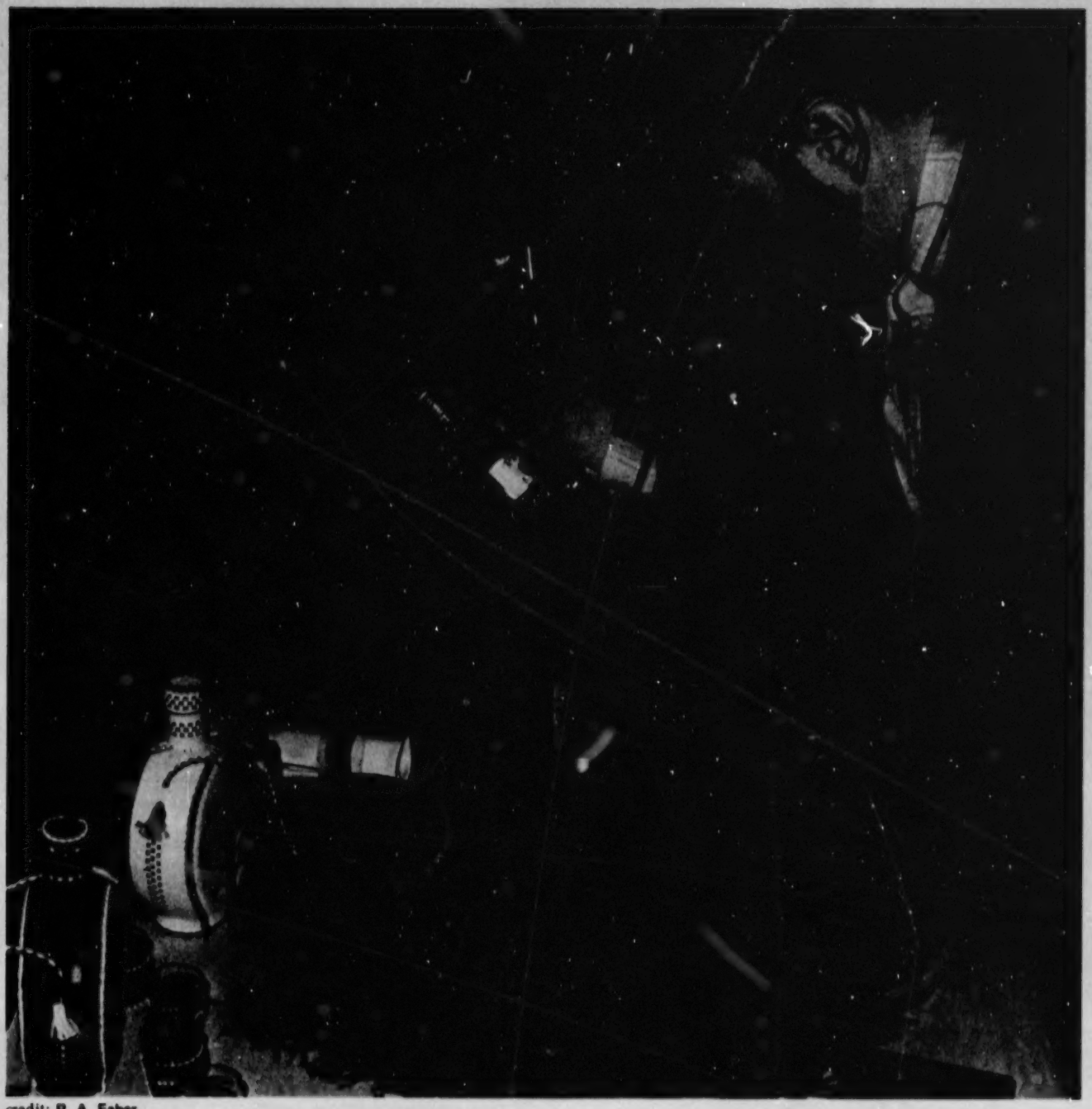
Examples of the first type of function within S.N.I.A. are the Handyman Project and the Housing Corporation. Through Handyman, local residents who are skilled in plumbing, roofing, carpentry, etc., provide low-cost home repairs to other residents of the neighborhood. The Housing Corporation has been involved in the purchasing and rehabilitation of several buildings in the neighborhood. Efforts have also been made to board up vacant buildings to prevent their deterioration beyond the point where rehabilitation is impossible. Other programs initiated by S.N.I.A. included poverty, education, health, and drug abuse programs.

S.N.I.A. currently serves as a public relations organization for the neighborhood. New residents, often friends of active S.N.I.A. members, have purchased seventy-five buildings with plans of rehabilitating them in recent years. "Selling" Soulard as a possible residential area for new families is, of course, part of the essence of neighborhood rejuvenation.

S.N.I.A. has also been involved in an extended effort to win public recognition for the historical significance of Soulard. Their efforts have met with some success. In 1972 Soulard was placed on the State and National Register of Historic Places. One benefit of listing is that no federal money from government-supported projects may be used for building demolition in the neighborhood without approval being granted by the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Within the past year, the Soulard Restoration Group was established. This group of over thirty-five new Soulard residents is an informal association which is working to attract new homeowner residents to the neighborhood. Landmarks Association of St. Louis and the Junior League of St. Louis have become actively involved in publicizing the historic significance of Soulard and are presently restoring buildings in the neighborhood for resale to sympathetic owners. The establishment of a model revolving fund which Landmarks is developing should be of assistance in preserving other neighborhoods in the city.





credit: R. A. Faber

Efforts are now underway to make Soulard a city historic district under St. Louis City Ordinance #56100. The ordinance is designed to preserve neighborhoods with historical and architectural significance and would offer several advantages for Soulard. A set of standards providing guidelines so both new structures and rehabilitations may harmonize with the designs of the historic buildings will be enforced by law. Further restrictions on demolition would be imposed. Any structures which were beyond repair could be razed.

There are various risks involved for the Soulard residents if the neighborhood becomes a City Historic District. The greatest of these is that higher taxes resulting from increased land values and the increased costs of home repair to meet the guidelines (not retroactive) would force many of Soulard's poorer residents out of the neighborhood. Especially vulnerable would be the elderly who live on fixed incomes and many of the rural migrants who live below the poverty level. Recent arrivals in Soulard from other parts of the metropolitan area who are predominantly middle class would not be similarly affected.

Soulard was first officially recognized as a possible "restoration" area in the early 1970's. The emphasis in planning documents stresses private resources for restoration and the market for the return of the middle class. Fortunately, both the leaders of the S.N.I.A. and other interest groups recognize the class-based conflict of interests and are working with the Community Development Agency to insure a plan which will not force residents from the neighborhood. As this booklet is being written, the Community Development Agency and neighborhood representatives agreed on a Historic District zoning bill. The final step involves the passage of the bill by the Board of Aldermen.

While the European immigrants and their descendants have played a significant role in the history of Soulard, their current impact on the neighborhood is stable and unlikely to increase in the foreseeable future. The majority of the small businesses in the area are still owned by immigrant descendants; the various ethnic churches still provide the major social outlets on weekends and during summers.

The 1970 census showed only 507 foreign stock among the 5,576 residents of Census Tract 23-D (1234). While there is no available data, it is reasonable to assume that the residents of foreign stock are over-represented among Soulard's elderly. With no widespread immigration foreseeable in the immediate future, it is likely that the percentage of foreign stock in the area's population will continue to decrease. Severe declines in membership make the future of three of the four Catholic parishes precarious.

> *I think the parish has a future, ethnically speaking. And I think for a long time, as far as I can see right now, one of the reasons would be that many of our Croatian people are coming over right now with newcomers. So at least the generation will pass away before this place will pass away. In other words, maybe thirty-five to forty years . . .* (S-15)

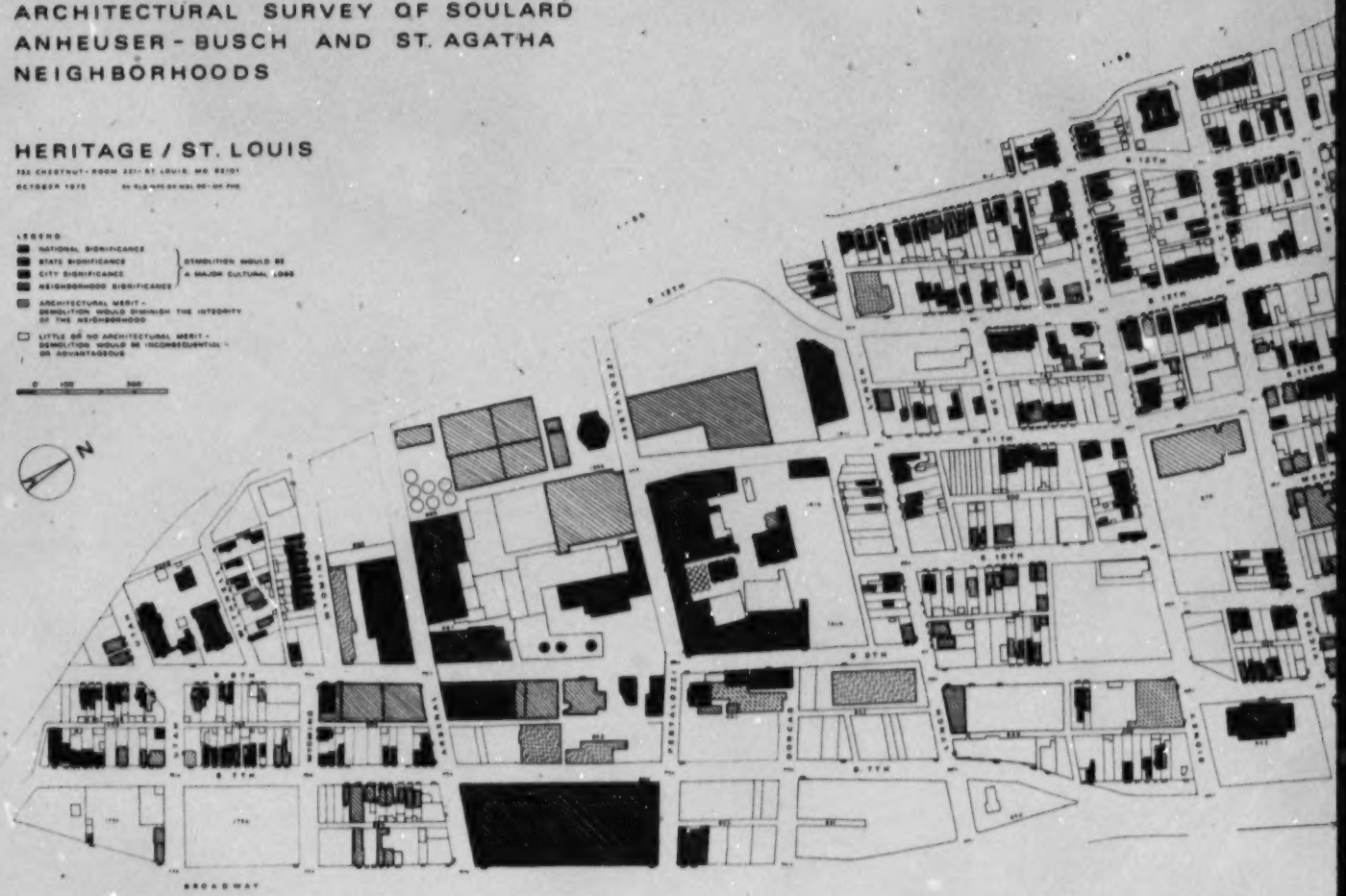
Although the return of former residents to the Soulard area has been discussed, it seems unlikely that the neighborhood will become attractive to many of the ethnic Americans who have moved to other parts of the metropolitan area. As many of the families are Catholic, they place a great deal of value on easy access to parochial schools for their children. This is no longer available in Soulard.[64] Although no systematic data was gathered, it seems from our interviews that a high percentage of the second- and third-generation ethnics who had moved from Soulare are homeowners. This would tie them to their current neighborhoods as the purchase of a house represents both a major financial investment and a source of pride. Lastly, a large number of former residents do not like the neighborhood and consciously distinguish themselves from the current residents. Many, even those who maintain active membership in the ethnic parishes, are fearful of the neighborhood in spite of the actual low crime rate.[65]

It does seem likely that Soulard will again serve as a receiving area for a new group of in-migrants to the inner city. While former residents migrated from Europe and rural areas in the southern United States, most new residents in the foreseeable future will probably be from suburban areas of St. Louis County and out-of-town professionals. With the passage of the bill to make Soulard a City Historic District, the neighborhood could be an attractive residential choice for those young families who find life in the suburbs confining and bland, especially those who are history or architecture buffs. Current benefits, such as the safety relative to other inner city neighborhoods and the availability of housing at reasonable prices, have attracted many families in recent years.

The other group whose numbers may increase is the elderly. Soulard offers unique advantages for maintaining and serving elderly residents due to its location, density, and social institutions. An active effort is taking place to create a consortium to develop decent housing for the elderly in Soulard. As the leaders of the S.N.I.A. are politically sophisticated and capable of representing the neighborhood's interests with governmental agencies, the chances of Soulard stabilizing are good. As pride develops in the heritage of Soulard, more and more residents will become familiar with the strengths and traditions of ethnicity.

ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF SOULARD ANHEUSER-BUSCH AND ST. AGATHA NEIGHBORHOODS

HERITAGE / ST. LOUIS


LEGEND
NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE
STATE SIGNIFICANCE
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DEMOLITION WOULD BE A MAJOR CULTURAL LOSS
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PREPARATION OF THIS SURVEY WAS GREATLY AIDED
BY GRANTS FROM CAMELOT AND
THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF LOUIS

soulard neighborhood colloquium

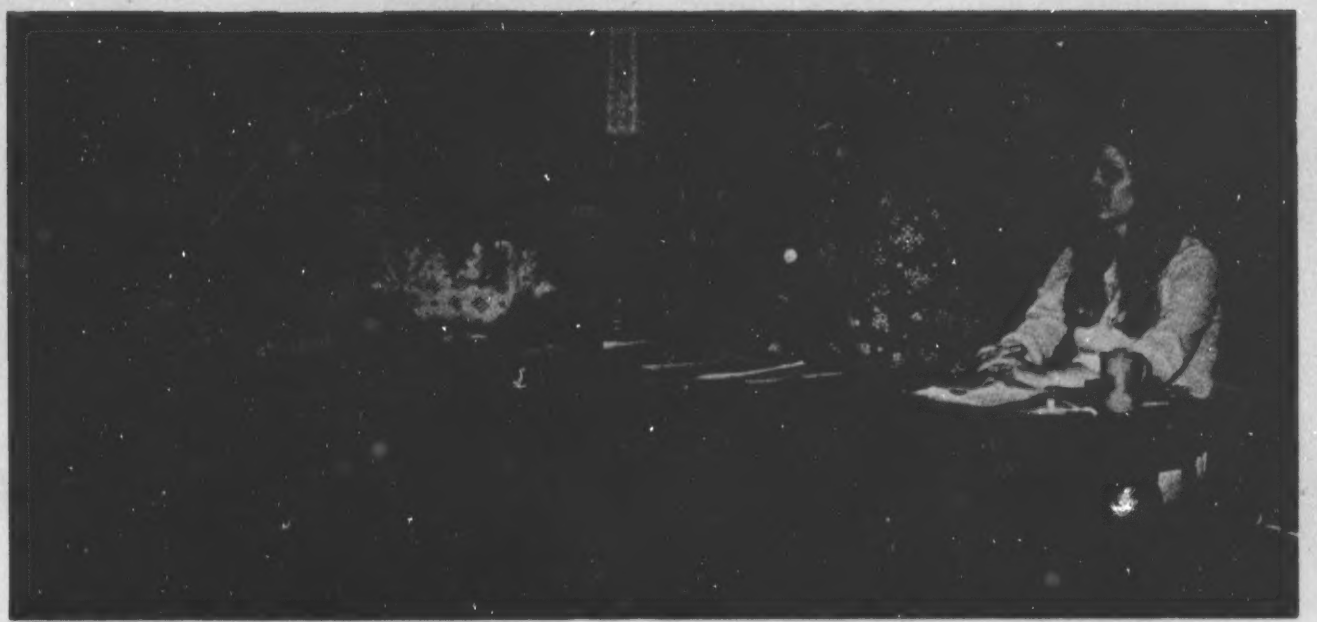
On Sunday, April 20, 1975, the Soulard Neighborhood Improvement Association and those involved with the Ethnic Studies Project at Washington University jointly sponsored the Soulard Neighborhood Colloquium. As the active involvement of the University researchers in the neighborhood was nearing an end, a major goal of the colloquium was to share the data which had been gathered with community members and ethnic groups being studied. The City of St. Louis cooperated in the endeavor by making the second floor of the Soulard Market available.

The gymnasium at the Market had the appearance of a European fair as members of the ethnic parishes presented booth displays featuring clothing and other articles from their Old World culture. They were also primarily responsible for the refreshments which consisted of coffee and European pastries, including baklava, strudel, poppy seed cake, and kolachys. Other groups which constructed booth displays were the S.N.I.A. and a class from McKinley High School, composed of students from the neighborhood who had spent a semester studying Soulard and interviewing residents.

Several talks were presented to the audience, which was estimated at two hundred. Besides presentations by students from the University, there was a slide show featuring scenes from the neighborhood, a talk on the history of Soulard Market, and a discussion of the work done by McKinley High School students. Lively entertainment was presented by the Croatian Junior Tamburitzans.

A significant feature of the neighborhood colloquium was the diverse nature of its audience. Besides persons from the University and the ethnic groups studied, many of the rural migrant population of Soulard and the recent newcomers from other parts of the St. Louis area attended the afternoon's activities. Although they were from different backgrounds, they shared an interest in the heritage of Soulard and a concern for its future.

credit: R. A. Faber



credit: R. A. Faber

The research for this booklet was conducted by graduate and undergraduate students and community members under the sponsorship of the Social Science Institute at Washington University through a grant from the Division of International Education, the United States Office of Education under the Ethnic Heritage Studies Act of 1974-75.

The purpose of the booklet is twofold: to train students to understand and use the wealth of cultural materials on this American urban neighborhood, Soulard, and to provide a booklet for the use of students and community members about the historic life of this community. This is an ongoing study. It is the intention of the authors that this is an unfinished book to which additions will be made as new information is collected.

The research was conducted through field methods which include participant observation in the community, analysis of historical documents about the community, survey research conducted among a random sample of residents, open-ended interviews with community leaders and the tape recording of oral histories with three generations of community residents.

Participant observation in the community was conducted by undergraduate and graduate students at Washington University who attended community functions, visited community restaurants, mapped the paths of activity in the community, and catalogued the commercial and institutional life of the area by visiting every commercial and institutional setting. There is a constant interplay between the role of the observer and the activity of the participant. Students developed strong identifications with neighborhood residents, although they were recognized as outsiders.

The analysis of historical documents included the use of census data from 1910 to 1970, the compilation of vital statistics from churches and institutions, the examination of written histories and letters, and the extensive use of newspapers. In each community, local newspapers and the publications of ethnic groups were valuable resources for the understanding of the ethnic heritage of the communities. In some cases, land use maps and city planning documents were important resources for the study of community boundary designations and the property use changes in the communities.

Three types of interviewing were used in this study. The open-ended interview was used by students who talked to community leaders to gain a greater understanding of the issues which were important in the community over time. These interviews were conducted to give the respondent the greatest range of topics so that the student could learn about the community without a preset conception. The second type of interview technique was the oral history. Oral histories were structured from an agenda of questions to gain information about the community in 1900, in 1920, and in 1950. Whenever possible, three generations in the same family were interviewed. Unlike newspaper and institutional documents, the oral histories were designed to record the daily life of the families who make up the community, not necessarily the leaders or prominent citizens. The oral histories were taped. Excerpts from them appear in the text of the booklet. They are coded with the designation of the tape which is available from the Ethnic Heritage Data Bank at the St. Louis Public Library. The final interview technique was a questionnaire made up of a set of questions which allow the respondent limited choices. The questionnaire was used to gain information on a limited number of questions from a random sample of respondents.

Through the use of various research methods the students have compiled a picture of a community over time and the record of the ethnic heritage of the people who create the community. This is an ongoing history to be enriched by each additional contribution.

FOOTNOTES

The designations (S-1) through (S-23) refer to the oral history tapes which students recorded during the neighborhood study. S stands for Soulard; the numbering system refers to the tape record which is available at the libraries of Washington University and the University of Missouri, St. Louis.

1. Julius T. Muench, "The Contributions of Missouri's German Immigrants," *Bulletin.* (St. Louis, Missouri: Missouri Historical Society, April 1947), p. 84.
2. William Barnaby Faherty, S.J., *Dream by the River.* (St. Louis, Missouri: Piraeus, 1973), p. 54.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
4. Norbury Wayman and George McCue, Unpublished Research Paper for Heritage/St. Louis, 1975.
5. Faherty, *Dream by the River*, p. 65.
6. Walter O. Umbach, *Founded Upon Christ.* Off-set printing by the congregation, 1966, p. 10.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
9. Sister Audrey Olson, "St. Louis Germans 1850-1920: The Nature of an Immigrant Community and its Relation to the Assimilation Process" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1970). A detailed study of the Germans in St. Louis.
10. J. T. Scharf, *History of St. Louis City and County.* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts Co., 1883), p. 1659.
11. Considerable disagreement existed among Catholics as to the wisdom of this action. Many felt the requirement a step backward in the process of assimilation. Proponents, however, believed that the maintenance of the language and cultural heritage would strengthen the immigrant's faith.
12. The Church of Sts. Peter and Paul was designated a City Landmark in 1972.
13. Muench, "The Contributions of Missouri's German Immigrants," p. 83.
14. Wayman and McCue, *op. cit.*
15. Camille N. Dry and Richard J. Compton, *Pictorial St. Louis – 1875.* Reprinted by Harry M. Hagen, St. Louis, Mo., 1971, Plate 26.
16. Walter B. Stevens, "The Missouri Tavern," *Missouri Historical Review,* (Columbia, Mo.: The State Historical Society of Missouri, October 1973, p. 94)
17. Newell, Dianne, "With Respect to Breweries," *Historic Preservation,* Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, Jan.-Mar. 1975, p. 28.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Barney W. Frauenthal, *Barney's Information Guide to St. Louis.* (St. Louis, Mo., 1902) "St. Louis is famous for her Summer Gardens. During the Season, from May until October, no more delightful evening ride can be planned than a street car trip to one of the Gardens, to all of which the admittance is free with a nominal sum charged for reserved seats. Light Opera, Vaudeville or other entertainments are provided from time to time where, in the cool of the open air and the assurance that none but high class amusements are provided, is a treat that few feel disposed to miss."
20. John Schneider, "Riot and Reaction in St. Louis 1834-1856," *Missouri Historical Review* (Columbia, Mo.: The State Historical Society of Missouri, January 1, 1974) p. 171.
21. Letter of April 5, 1974, written to W. Phillip Cotton, Jr. by Lois Kittlaus, former director of physical education for the City of St. Louis and lifelong Turner.
22. *Golden Jubilee, St. Louis Turn-Bezirk,* (St. Louis, Mo.: C. Schreiner Printing Co., 1912), p. 35.
23. Prokes interview, 11/13/74.
24. Jay Corzine and Irene Dabrowski, "The Ethnic Factor and Neighborhood Stability in St. Louis: The Czechs in Soulard and South St. Louis." (unpublished paper presented at the Midwest Sociological Society, Chicago, Illinois, April 1975).
25. Ruth Crawford, *The Immigrant in St. Louis.* (St. Louis, Mo., 1916) p. 28.
26. William Hyde and Howard Conrad, *Encyclopedia of the History of the History of St. Louis* (St. Louis, Mo., 1899) pp. 1436-37.
27. Stephen Raiche, National Register Forms.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Prokes interview, 9/15/74.
30. Prokes interview, 9/15/74; Sulz interview, 10/15/74.
31. Pat Jones, "Whatever Happened to Bohemian Hill?" (unpublished paper, University of Missouri, St. Louis, 1972).
32. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* August 3, 1975.
33. St. Louis Missouri Republican, April 13, 1902.
34. Prokes interview, 11/13/74.
35. The C.S.P.S. and the Sokol were the major organizations among the non-Catholic Czechs in St. Louis, but they were not the only ones. The 1900 edition of *Gould's Directory* listed a total of twelve benevolent societies and four singing societies.
36. Corzine and Dabrowski, *op. cit.*
37. John Albury Bryan, *Henry Shaw, Botanist-Benefactor, and George Ingham Barnett, Architect: Co-Workers in American Culture* (Chillicothe, Mo.: Community Press, Inc., 1975) p. 59.
38. The "park" is Tower Grove, begun in 1866, where Shaw provided the three large bronze statues which adorn the Mall. The statue of Baron von Humboldt, noted German explorer and scientist, was unveiled at festivities to which Mr. Shaw invited all St. Louisans of German extraction; the unveiling of the statue of Christopher Columbus provided a similar occasion for St. Louisans of Italian descent.
39. Charles Compton, *Fifty Years of Progress of the St. Louis Public Library, 1876-1926,* St. Louis, Mo., 1927, p. 27.
40. Crawford, *The Immigrant in St. Louis,* pp. 61-62.
41. Fr. Albert Prokes, *Souvenir of the 49th Anniversary of the Present Holy Trinity Slovak Church,* St. Louis, Mo., 1964, p. 9.
42. *Ibid.*
43. John Albury Bryan, "The Slavs in their New Home" (unpublished paper, nd., collection of Heritage/St. Louis, p. 1)
44. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 6
46. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
48. *American Almanac, 1972,* p. 87-88.
49. *Rapid Transit for St. Louis,* St. Louis, Mo., 1926, p. 17.
50. Fr. Spiro Andrijanic, *Golden Jubilee, 1954, St. Joseph Croatian Church.*

51. Corzine and Dabrowski, *op. cit.*
52. Robert Vickery, "Soulard Market–A Unique Social Landmark," *Landmarks of St. Louis* (Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc., 1963) p. 15.
53. Margaret Sullivan, "Hyphenism in St. Louis, 1900-1921; The View from the Outside." (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, St. Louis University, 1969).
54. Milcic Interview, 11/26/74.
55. *Comprehensive City Plan*, City Plan Commission, 1947, St. Louis, Mo., 1917.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
57. Brandhorst interview, 8/15/75.
58. In 1973, an informal agreement was reached with the Building Division that only those abandoned structures which were structurally unsound would be demolished.
59. Corzine and Dabrowski, *op. cit.*
60. S-15
61. U.S. Census, 1920-1950.
62. Lee Rainwater, Alvin W. Wolfe, *et al.*, "The Soulard Area: Adaptations by Urban White Families to Poverty," (Washington University, St. Louis: Social Science Institute, 1968) p. 154.
63. Brandhorst interview, 8/15/75.
64. Many elements in the community have become involved in the problem of education. Although an alternative school has not yet developed, the creation and funding of the Near Southside Community School at Siegel School is a concrete product of this interest.
65. Interviews 1974 and 1975.

credit: **R. A. Faber**

ethnic heritage study council members

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